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MISS NANCY'S PILGRIMAGE.

A Story of Travel.

By VIRGINIA W. JOHNSON,

AUTHOR OF

"THE CATSKILL FAIRIES," "THE CALDERWOOD SECRET,"
"JOSEPH THE JEW," "A SACK OF GOLD," &c.

"Measure for measure."

NEW YORK:

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MISS NANCY'S PILGRIMAGE.

CHAPTER I.

TEN MINUTES LATE.

ON the 10th of June, 1874, the steamship *Acis* sailed from New York for Liverpool, with one hundred and fifty cabin passengers, and four hundred in the steerage.

Beside the bulwark stood Miss Nancy Hawse, school-marm, alone in a crowd of excited human beings, isolated by the very audacity of her choice, and keenly observant of those about her. The tender warnings of a sobbing mother reached her ear, as a young bride in exquisite toilet clung to the proud parent, listening between tears and smiles, while her pretty blue eyes sought those of the bridegroom.

Miss Nancy admired the grouping of this picture, with a little pang of doubt and wonder, marveling, perhaps, that some women seem to have bloomed into the world only as the more delicate blossoms, their velvet petals unruffled by a single rude breath, stanch protection of thorn and leaves guarding them on every side, while others must needs sheathe themselves in rough husk, or be crushed in the battle.

"Had I been one of these, I should not be here to-day," reflected the plain woman beside the bulwark, and inhaled the fragrance of a bunch of violets, which she carried in her hand, with a certain amount of character in the action.

Nobody came to bid her farewell; indeed, her departure was strongly condemned by the few friends she had left in her village home; much less were any of the wreaths and garlands of exotics, the ships of tuberoses, the fairy castles of snowy lilies, which had been borne up the plank for hours in fragrant procession, for her. She was alone, and she had purchased the bunch of violets on her way to the steamer. She found herself, more than once, wishing that some unknown admirer had unexpectedly remembered her thus, as these floral trophies were carried past by irascible stewards.

The June sky was cloudless, the June sun poured down rays of heat on wharves which are a disgrace to our modern civilization, emitting evil odors, decaying in the slimy ebb of tides, and heaped with the débris of sea and shore. Since noon the pier had been choked with a surging mass of vehicles, merchandise, and delayed voyagers, like a clogged artery flowing slowly to the ship's side. Since noon, the steerage had been recklessly imbibing "Jersey lightning" with hosts of friends and well wishers, to pay the penalty in *delirium tremens* and death at sea. It was a familiar scene, often repeated, but with the novelty of entire freshness to Miss Nancy. Her pulse beat high when her ear caught the first hissing of expectant steam in huge boilers, which meant change, release, the unknown; the nomad spirit stirred, awakened within her breast. Had she been born a Russian, how would she have wandered as a pilgrim, buoyed up by the same enthusiasm that enables the Slavic women to traverse weary leagues in search of a shrine, a goal! As an American, she might still hope to hold a front rank among the wanderers of the earth. Her eye glistened as it rested on brass and iron, polished to dazzling brilliancy of machinery; a thread of filmy smoke curled from the pipe overhead.

The club man, delicately gloved, and with a flower in his coat, was paying his farewell visit to the conscious young lady, whose simpered replies were rendered inarticulate, and possibly ineffective, by the general uproar and confusion. The business man, sallow and thin, but beginning to feel the elasticity of emancipation from work, tossed cigars to his friends ashore, and ordered unlimited Champagne, while fervent promises to write by pilot and from Queenstown were extorted. This wave of kindly sympathy, the expansion of heart incident to leave-taking which may never be followed by greeting again in this world, reached the lonely woman beside the bulwark, and comforted her. After all, she was a part of the great human family, and the widening of the circles from that central ring of individual affection, inclosed her in a colder, outer embrace, not devoid of solace.

Twice had the bell rung; the gold band

of the captain's cap had already become visible on the upper deck; the blonde whiskers and ruddy countenances of other officers began to pervade every thing below; final partings had taken place, subdued and impulsive; a dark fringe of humanity lined the pier. The very moment of departure had come, and Miss Nancy drew a long breath, half of exultation and half of fear.

Suddenly the planks of the wharf echoed to the thunder of rolling wheels, the tread of horses' flying hoofs, and a carriage appeared, driven at a furious pace. With the instinct of ready sympathy and interest peculiar to her class, Miss Nancy gazed at the handsome equipage.

"They will be too late, as sure as the world!" she exclaimed, involuntarily, and forgot the recent injunction of a sailor to keep her dress free from the great wire rope along-side.

A gentleman, hastily alighting from the carriage, assisted out a veiled lady, a young girl, a maid, and little boy.

"How *are* they to get on board?" again exclaimed Miss Nancy, watching the half-withdrawn bridge, and then she flushed an uncomfortable red to discover that her companions were not at all interested in the belated travelers; indeed, such interest as they could spare from their own affairs was centred in a stare of astonishment at herself.

What had she done? Did none of them care whether the party safely embarked or not? Surely such selfish indifference was scarcely human, according to her code, and certainly not Christian, to say the very least.

The lady, muffled in a veil, swept along the deck, having passed up the restored bridge, and her manner betokened a languid calmness, as if it were the most natural matter possible that she should have kept a steamship waiting. The young girl, with bright golden hair waving beneath a little hat, tripped after unconcernedly, and the portly gentleman who followed her, laden with shawls and bags, alone looked flushed and discomposed.

There was a little rush of commotion near the bulwark: the plain woman standing there had caught her dress in the gliding wire-rope; the portly gentleman paused helplessly, his hands encumbered with wraps, and suffered others to wrench away the flounce sadly frayed and tattered in the contest. The bunch of violets had fallen from Miss Nancy's grasp in the struggle to release her new traveling-dress from such damaging contact; the portly gentleman trod on it with one massive foot, and passed on, unheeding, summoned by a querulous inquiry from the veiled lady, his wife.

It was not the first time he had ruthlessly trodden upon such flowers as had been vouchsafed to Nancy Hawse's pathway in life, and, then, the bunch of violets was such a very small one.

The party disappeared below, and Miss Nancy, with a white, set face, was left to recover her composure, while securing the ragged trimmings of her flounce with a pin. What a fool she was! Even now, in her sober middle age, it made her heart beat with nervous rapidity to realize that John Pierman and his family were to be her fellow-passengers on board the *Acis*. Curious freak of destiny! After a separation of weary years, three persons who had done so much to make or mar each other's life, were gathered together for a sea-voyage. A wild, petulant impulse to go ashore and give up every thing possessed her; the mist of tears came suddenly to her eyes; a painful knot gathered in her throat. Was there an element of relief, or only additional pain, in the fact that John Pierman had failed to recognize her? Was she so much changed, then? All the bright anticipations of her day were clouded by the very fact of the inmates of the lately arrived carriage having actually embarked with herself, after her own suspense and interest in their behalf. One mortal exercises a vast influence over the pleasure at least of another in this world.

The *Acis* moved at her anchorage. Miss Nancy was not so obtuse as to fail in responsive enthusiasm to the first surge of a majestic vessel; the slow sweep past the pier, freighted with the waiting throng; the genteel flutter of white pocket-handkerchiefs from the better classes merging into the prolonged shout of the steerage; old and young gazing wistfully on the ship homeward-bound; traces of toil, sorrow, and pinching poverty on many a rugged face. The pretty bride consented to raise her face from the embroidered handkerchief, in which it had been concealed since her mother's departure, in response to the cheers.

Miss Nancy was aware that the girl, with bright waving hair, stood at her elbow, gazing eagerly at the city; the little boy, clad as a valiant sailor, with a white anchor on his breast, pushed his way to the best post of observation, with the charming disregard for others peculiar to childhood. Nay, more, Miss Nancy was conscious, in every fibre of her being, that the stout gentleman, Dr. John Pierman, and the veiled lady were behind her.

"Well, we are really off, my dear," he said, gayly, as if with restored good-humor. "It would have been no joke to be left, though."

"They never sail on time," replied the lady, coldly. "What an inferior-looking set of passengers we have here! I am confident the Arrow Line carries a better class."

"Tut! tut! you need have no association with strangers, Margaret. The Cocks are

on board, and have taken all the best cabins," added the husband, with unguarded frankness.

"All the best cabins?" repeated the wife, sharply. "Pray, what accommodations have we, then?"

"Don't scold, mamma," urged the young girl, turning around. "We shall do very well, I am sure; and this great boat is such fun. Look at the dear old Hudson once more."

Miss Nancy listened quietly, an obstinate expression settling about her large, firm mouth. She no longer changed color and trembled, and she stood her ground unflinchingly; but she would not move an inch in order to face these people. The next words uttered by the veiled lady struck her ear with a peculiar vibration:

"I wonder if we shall ever see it all again."

The little boy tugged at Miss Nancy's gown, either mistaking her for the maid, or needing a confidante.

"Look at the fort," he insisted.

"Yes," she assented, almost inaudibly, studying instead the little peachy face, warmly colored as that of an Italian child; a small scarlet mouth, revealing tiny white teeth; dark eyes, scanning the fort; and a tress of chestnut hair curling on the broad, low forehead beneath the straw yachting-hat.

"What a silly mamma!" laughed the young girl, blithely. "We shall be back in September, and I only wish we could stay longer."

Again a sense of weakness smote Miss Nancy; all her fortitude seemed to melt away at the first blow; when she had fancied herself so strong, having outlived the age of romance.

Quiet, tinged with solemnity, crept over the ship's company for a space of time, as the distant hills melted to the blue of horizon-line, as city roofs faded to spires and a net-work of masts, as the deep azure of cloudless sky was reflected in the untroubled calm of the bay. The veiled lady had become very silent, the young girl ceased to laugh; only the shrill treble of the little man in yachting costume kept up a volley of questions.

An hour later, Miss Nancy still stood in the same attitude, as if carved out of stone, watching the waning shores lying in the full radiance of the afternoon sunshine, while the soft breeze wafted the last fragrance of home in the perfume of New Jersey orchards and gardens.

"I wonder if we shall ever see it all again," she repeated, absently; and a distant object flashed tremulously, sparkled, and expired like a beacon.

She had taken her resolution, marked out her own line of conduct before the bluff old pilot stepped over the side, and the little steam-tug adorned with flags, vocal with the spasmodic exertions of a band, dropped astern. She must make the best of this unfortunate rencounter with John Pierman and his family, for she had chosen her own way —at what a cost!—in visiting Europe, and must abide by it. A degree of stubborn pride in not turning back, in having destroyed one's retreat at the starting-point, has more to do with the fulfillment of many aims than appears on the surface Miss Nancy, having reasoned that it would be no difficult matter to avoid the Pierman family in such a crowd, at length descended to her cabin, intent on mending her flounce, and discovering who her room-mate might be.

Curiosity was fully and unexpectedly gratified. In the passage the little boy in yachting costume stood on the brass-bound ladder, pleasantly suggestive of a flight to upper berths, endeavoring to poke his head through the port-hole. The girl with bright hair was sorting flowers into the marble basin of Miss Nancy's own cabin, and the skirt of a black silk dress billowing out of an opposite door belonged to no other person than the veiled lady.

Miss Nancy's quarters on board ship were located in the very enemy's camp! A deep flush burned in her usually cool cheek. The pilot's boat skimmed past, framed by the port-hole, with white sails unfurled to the breeze. Oh that she were with the pilot, instead of standing on the threshold of cabin 15, steamship *Acis!* All her heart went out in an ineffectual longing to escape to the bluff man in a rough coat, whose boat was standing away to the shore.

"Are you to be my room-mate?" she inquired slowly, still pausing on the threshold.

A ray of light, intensified by the glancing blue of sunlit waves below, fell on the girl's rippling tresses, as she sat there arranging her wealth of roses; and the older woman could never afterward disassociate her from their rich and subtle perfume.

"You are Miss Hawse, then?" said the girl, looking up quickly.

Across the narrow passage the black silk dress rustled, undulated, and a thin aquiline face became visible, wearing an affable smile, as of one prepared to be most gracious to a daughter's room-mate. Miss Nancy turned, and the two women looked at each other.

Instant recognition leaped from pale-blue eyes, and was met by calm gray eyes; a scarcely perceptible nervous quiver distorted Mrs. Pierman's thin lips, and then she held out her hand, would even have given Nancy a little feminine peck of a kiss, only that the latter shrunk from such a greeting.

"You here!" she exclaimed, in accents of unfeigned surprise. "I thought you were married long ago."

"I am not married, although that need

not deter one from travel," replied Miss Nancy, somewhat dryly.

"Of course not. Yet people from Briarbush seldom visit Europe, you must acknowledge."

Mrs. Pierman's voice was smooth and sweet, only with a plaintive intonation which would some day degenerate into querulousness.

The young girl could make nothing unusual out of this meeting. Two mature ladies confronted each other—one tall, thin, and *distingué*, perhaps by reason of her apparel; and the other of medium height, stouter, with brown hair gathered into a knot at the back of the head, in a most unconventional coiffure and a gray stuff traveling-dress of unmistakable rustic fashion.

The daughter decided unhesitatingly that Miss Nancy came from the country, and lacked style, and then she made herself a place in the conversation, with all the assurance of a petted child.

"Papa could not get me a cabin alone, you know, because the boat was so crowded, and it is ever so much more expensive; besides, mamma has No. 16, and Tom and Marie are beyond. I am glad you are to be my room-mate. Will you have a rose? Oh, do take one, please; I've such quantities of them here. Are you a good sailor, and did you know mamma before? How funny!"

"Miss Hawse and I were friends when we were young," said Mrs. Pierman, doubtfully.

"When you were young," said Blanche, with the most unconscious inflection of sarcastic incredulity.

"We were once young," said Miss Nancy, smiling.

She accepted the rose, ashamed of her own reluctance to do so, and afterward went on deck again to escape from her most unwelcome neighbors.

CHAPTER II.

GRANDMOTHER'S ROSES.

THE dinner-bell rang at four o'clock; there was a clatter of crockery in the great saloon; whiffs of steaming soups ascended through the open sky-light; and passengers trooped below with the smiling aspect peculiar to the commencement of a voyage.

Miss Nancy did not join the throng, contenting herself with watching the blue waves ripple gently against the ship's prow instead: indeed, she always slighted the more material comforts of life in moments of intense excitement. Her temples throbbed, and her cheeks still wore the unwonted flush which had dyed them crimson on discovering the propinquity of the Piermans below decks. If John had been there himself, the ordeal would have been doubly severe. Memory, buried in peaceful oblivion so long, started up, like a warrior armed with innumerable weapons, sharp, insinuating, irritating; and the equipoise of Miss Nancy's nature was not proof against the unexpected foe. Oh, to call back the vanished years when John Pierman was her lover, and all the world was filled with fairest promise, before doubt, mystery, and Margaret Harrison stepped between them! Would she recall the years if she could? Miss Nancy pondered with a puzzled wonder, watching the waves dance and ripple, the blue sky arch to the remote horizon, benignant in its all-embracing loveliness, and then a sense of soothing peacefulness stole over her. There are calms as well as fretting currents and fearful storms on the great ocean of life. In her fingers she held the rose given her by John's daughter. How vividly the scent brought back grandmother's porch, where the rose-bush twined which had always seemed to mark the years of her own growth, as June, leafy, dewy, tender, with the budding promises of riper midsummer, came round year after year!

First a little girl in calico gown and sunbonnet had reached up with chubby hands for the large white flower, each snowy petal expanding tremulously to the breeze, and a boy, taller and older, had cut it for her, proud of possessing the new jack-knife which enabled him to perform the act of gallantry. A second little girl, also attired in calico, and swinging a tin pail, had stood at the gate.

"Give me one too," she had cried, with ready jealousy.

Then grandmother's face had appeared at the pantry window, spectacles on nose, and her thin old voice had piped,

"Children, leave my roses alone!"

The second little girl, Maggy Harrison by name, had departed sulkily, carrying her father's dinner to the new house on the hill, which he was building, just as Nancy's parent came striding along the road, laden with trophies yielded him by the very heart of the woods.

Seated on the deck of the *Acis*, she had only to close her eyes, and the dear familiar image appeared to her once more. A tall, shambling figure wearing a loose coat, and broad straw hat pushed back on his head until it formed a halo about a serene, kindly face. Such was Nancy's father, the village minister, upbraided by his people, with a gentle toleration because of a reprehensible habit of poking in muddy pools after polliwigs, and wasting hours searching for "leaves an' things" among the hills, yet followed by all the children for miles around.

"It is a fern, my dears," he had exclaimed, excitedly; and forthwith little Nancy and John Pierman were pressing close against his

knee, while he sorted his treasures on the stone door-steps of the old red homestead.

Again grandmother's keen face appeared at the window, gazing scornfully at the group.

"Hezekiah, Deacon Baylis has been here the better part of an hour a-waitin' to see you about the Sunday-school books," she said, primly.

"Lord bless me!" exclaimed father, starting up in guilty haste, "I forgot it was Thursday."

"Crawford's cows trampled down our clover last night; but I don't suppose you'll say nothin'," added grandmother, in a sombre tone.

John Pierman caught at father's hand eagerly.

"Let me go with you next time," implored the boy.

"To be sure," replied the minister, patting his head.

Afterward Nancy heard father praise John to grandmother as a boy of promise.

"Most boys are glad of the chance to get off into the woods," observed grandmother, clicking her knitting-needles.

Perhaps this early praise of John took root in Nancy's nature as a firm conviction, and thenceforth became a part of her being; for she believed in father always with the firmest, most unwavering allegiance, and read her reward in his dying eyes on the dark day before she closed the minister's lids forever, when she was a thoughtful, grave woman twenty-five years old.

June flushed and faded, with the roses blooming about grandmother's porch: the tall, slender girl, not unmindful of the becomingness of her muslin gown, could very well have gathered her own flowers, but the young man again plucked one, and placed it in her brown hair. The crescent of a moon in the clear sky silvered the tops of elm and maple trees, and lay on the white road beyond the gate, leaving the garden a dim expanse of odorous stillness all in shadow. The second girl no longer looked over the fence, the wheel of fortune having revolved for the carpenter's daughter with capricious suddenness, and swept her away to the distant city, where she was adopted by a rich lady. Humphrey Baylis, the deacon's son, a long youth in ill-fitting garments, did loiter past the gate, directing wistful glances at the porch where Nancy's gown shimmered softly in the dusk, and John Pierman, always fiery and impetuous, had frowned in response to her airy laughter. John was very exacting, and could ill brook interruption. Behold, was he not detailing the grievances of his lot, sure of Nancy's ready sympathy? Hampered by poverty, an orphan who already fought his own battle, ambition was also awakening in John's breast. He would go forth into the world, and be a great physician; and Nancy had listened with a little gasp of awe at the prospect. Then grandmother's voice had sounded from the sitting-room, more inexorable than the brass-bound clock on the shelf,

"Nancy, it's time you was abed."

Oh, the burning indignation of maidenhood at such ignominious summons within-doors, when the night is cool and sweet, the moon shining, and another young voice moves the ear! On the evening in question, Nancy had obeyed a second, sharper warning with a swiftness suggestive of extreme exasperation, had banged the house door, and exclaimed,

"How I wish there was no such thing as *sleep*, grandmother! It is just like bandaging your eyes for fear of seeing God's firmament in all its glory, to go to bed on such a night as this."

"Young gals were not allowed to gad about evenings in my day. You'll be sleepy enough to-morrow morning, mebbe," replied grandmother; then closed the big Bible, and, removing the spectacles from her sharp old nose for the day, put them to bed in a morocco case, previous to retiring herself.

After that were the days years, or only shadows fraught with pain and sinking misgivings? It is possible to look back, disillusioned, to the tragic period of one's youth, with a wonder akin to numbness at one's own part in the drama, strung by excitement to play a false rôle, forced by circumstances to step wholly out of the routine of self. John Pierman, once *protégé* of the village doctor, had gone to the great city two years before to study in the colleges. Briarbush knew that when he came home on those rare vacations he went straight to the minister's house, with whom he was a favorite: and Nancy's secret was not so securely locked in her own breast as she fancied; for gossip — with the aid of Betty Hodges, who helped with the washing at the minister's house every week — had inserted that burglar's key of shrewd conjecture, and rifled her treasury, before John had asked her to marry him when he should be established. Briarbush had settled such knotty problems as where the young couple were to live, and on what income, with many head-shakes, entirely to its own satisfaction, long in advance of the lovers. Nancy had waited and hoped in serene security, her energy finding outlet in teaching the village academy, a place of honor readily assigned her by reason of her superior "schooling." Had not Briarbush decided that the post of school-marm must be her future destiny on the day when she won the great "Webster, Unabridged," in the spelling-match with five neighboring villages? The town-hall was the scene of combat: all Briarbush put on its best bonnet to attend; and there was a delicious rumor concerning

sponge-cake and lemonade to be served afterward. The champion from Norton attacked and conquered "Cœlo-syria;" the competitor from Hackley, a prodigy of twelve, with apprehensive blue eyes, stormed "exosseous" with victorious banners; Milford's representative, a lank girl of sixteen, remained undaunted by "Absyrtus," or even "Xyster." These victories were as preliminary skirmishes. It was only when "Synchew" was given out by the judge that Nancy Hawse stood by her colors. Hackley faltered, Norton stammered, Milford fainted away in the height of contest and was laid out on a bench, and Nancy won the prize.

Briarbush was not likely to forget this victory, which gave the editor of *The Briarbush Banner* a field for the display of wit in taunting his less successful neighbors, and when the time came Nancy was installed as school-mistress. At eighteen she was her father's own daughter, not wholly understood by her neighbors, and greatly disapproved of by grandmother. Not only did Nancy spurn needle-work, that safeguard of womanhood, but spent all her leisure hours poring over old books, the veriest chaff in literature becoming precious grain to feed her hungry mind. Now, to waste time in reading books which might be spent in stitching, baking, or even visiting, was accounted a sin in the eyes of Briarbush, while grandmother strove in vain to make the minister see the evil of Nancy's ways. Of course, a minister was expected to live among his books, godly books, grandmother conceded; yet these odd volumes perused by Nancy, in battered covers, and often with no covers at all, which gave them a rakish, disreputable air, might be the emanation of the very works of darkness, for any thing grandmother, as a Christian woman, knew to the contrary. The minister had smilingly promised to investigate the matter, and next day he was discovered at dinner-time seated on the garret stairs, with his daughter's arm around his neck, while they together read a well-thumbed page. Nancy had run down quickly, and attempted to disarm grandmother with a kiss.

"I am certain no good will come to you after such doings," the old lady had said in her most severe tone, and had eaten her dinner afterward with the solemnity of one presiding at a funeral banquet.

One spring day a graceful and elegant young lady sued for admittance at the old red homestead, and the homely portal was opened wide. The threshold was well worn with the guest's foot, and the two women, grandmother and Nancy, only knew the expenses of unvarying hospitality, and how little sums laid apart in bureau drawers and stocking bags trickled slowly back to keep the main stream of family expenses in motion. This young lady was Margaret Harrison, beautifully dressed in silk and lace, pale, languid, and with a well-bred air of composure which became her. She wished to see dear old Briarbush once more, she said, and had always felt hurt by Nancy's neglect all these years. Honest Nancy was flattered and delighted. She received Margaret into her confidence, and in return ventured to ask shy questions about John Pierman, whose letters were not as regular of late as they had been heretofore. When the roses bloomed once more he was coming home, though, and then a wedding-day was to be talked about. Nancy was in no haste for the fulfillment of all rich promises; only the sweet, sustaining chord of John's love made harmony of the humble drudgery of her daily life. Margaret admitted having seen John in the great city where both lived; he was growing quite fashionable, she believed, and it was well for a young physician to establish a good connection as early as possible. Astonished, incredulous Briarbush sought in vain for the little girl of the calico frock in this suave, dignified embodiment of eighteen. Margaret was interested in every thing; she even visited the cemetery, and wept over the grave of her delinquent parent, whose preference for cider had led to stronger potations. The factory girls popped their heads out of every window of Deacon Baylis's great white mill when Margaret passed, attracted by that magnet, irresistible to factory girls, of city fashions. Humphrey Baylis, a sedate young man, with a long nose and high shirt-collar, alone remained proof against her fascinations, and obstinately walked home beside Nancy from evening meeting.

Another picture started out vividly on the canvas of memory: Humphrey Baylis leaning on the gate that Sunday evening, while Margaret, possibly piqued by his indifference, went into the house. Nancy had said, half wistfully,

"How handsome Margaret has grown, and superior to us all here."

"I don't think so," replied sober Humphrey Baylis; "she can not hold a candle to the woman I wish to make my wife."

"Indeed!" retorted Nancy, saucily; "and who may she be, sir?"

"You know very well, Nancy. Will you marry me?"

"What nonsense you are talking!" cried Nancy, snatching away the hand he had taken over the gate, and running up the path.

Margaret stood in the porch, peering suspiciously out into the darkness.

"It does not require great penetration to perceive—something," she said, archly.

"What?" demanded Nancy, flushing with annoyance and vague alarm.

"That you and Humphrey Baylis are lovers, or soon will be."

"You are mistaken," retorted Nancy, sharply; then added, falteringly, "I thought you knew—that is, John and I are to be married."

"Is it possible?" ejaculated Margaret, in a low tone.

"You seem to consider the circumstance very unusual," said Nancy, not without pique.

"Nothing is strange in this world," observed Margaret, with mature wisdom.

Next day she went away. The visit to her native village was a whim, and subsequent events threw no light on the motive which led the graceful young lady hither, so far as Nancy was concerned. Several letters passed between the girls—on tinted paper and in a slanting Italian hand on Margaret's part; square and plain and legible on that of Nancy.

John Pierman did not come home in the summer vacation; did not write any apology for the extraordinary measure; seemed to have passed into the land of silence. Oh, the longing and growing anxiety of eyes that watched the daily mail-bag with an ever-recurring pang of disappointment! Oh, the listless inaction of the August vacation when days of sultry heat succeeded each other without change! Pride kept Nancy's lips sealed; she even made excuses for John's non-appearance as best she could. The minister still smiled, and grandmother still worked, querulous and silent. Where was John Pierman? What evil had befallen him? She would wait patiently for his explanation; yet surely, left thus groping in utter darkness, she might seek such a little ray of oblique light as Margaret Harrison could afford. Most cunning epistle, concocted with infinite labor, compounded of careless village news, and just that casual inquiry, "Do you see John Pierman often?" revealing transparently the purport of the whole. Never from that day to this one on board the good ship *Acis* had Nancy received a word from Margaret Harrison.

The blow came suddenly, after all this suspense.

Grandmother found Nancy kneeling beside her father's chair in the study, hands clenched rigidly, white cheeks, and flaming, scornful eyes fixed on the sheet he was reading. John had written at last, a hasty, furious, exaggerated letter, freeing Nancy from her engagement, bidding her marry Humphrey Baylis, the rich man's son, and not wait to share possible years of poverty with him.

"You must wait patiently until he recovers his senses a little. This is the letter of a bitterly jealous man," said father, quietly.

Nancy laughed unsteadily, and knit her cold fingers nervously. The idea of John being jealous of her! Nobody ever noticed her much except slow, dry Humphrey Baylis, and that was because she snubbed and ridiculed him. Neither father nor daughter knew what the word "waiting" signified as they refolded the letter. The fulfillment of certainty was a newspaper directed in an unknown hand, containing the marriage of John Pierman and Margaret Harrison, the agony of a cruel awakening for Nancy, and the subsequent gloom of a morbidly cherished wrong, an abiding sorrow. What it all meant she would know at the judgment-day, but never in the light of this world, she reflected.

The rose-bush faded after that; autumn winds stripped away the leaves, and winter snows blanched the stem, playing pranks in decorative art with fairy pencilings of white flakes, frost-work, and icicles. In the stillness of a January arctic night the rose-bush died.

Miss Nancy seemed now to behold all in a mirror; a shape resembling herself, yet ghostly and unreal. Briarbush did not pity her much. She would marry Humphrey Baylis, a steady young man; and John Pierman had jilted her for handsome Margaret Harrison. That was the public verdict. Grandmother was silent, watching Nancy from the corners of her eyes, and hinting darkly that it might be well to invite Humphrey Baylis to tea; even suggesting a willingness to make cake for his benefit—a proposal indignantly repulsed by her granddaughter. Never were grief and wrong equal to her own. She brooded over it night and day, father watching her pityingly—the patient father!—and the sceptre of rule in the village school slipped from her nerveless grasp, Nancy being wholly out of joint with the wholesome routine of a working world. Humphrey Baylis had become the shadow of her footsteps. Grandmother stated the advantages of the match from an elderly point of view: a good man, belonging to the richest and most respected family in the community, and his wife could do much for the minister. Nancy's spirit, torn asunder in the conflict between hope, ambition, and a sickening disgust of self, finally rose from the abasement of such poisonous flattery, returning Humphrey Baylis the answer he deserved, as one who generously yields all, and receives nothing in response. Then Humphrey married his cousin Jane, and grandmother gave Nancy up with grim resignation, as the girl moped on through winter storms and summer sunshine, a burden to herself and others. Only father never uttered words of reproach, shielded her from criticism, strove, half wistfully, to interest her in his ferns and little humble wild flowers, weaving parables about the Better Land for her dulled ear.

Uncle Simon was destined to have greater influence over his niece's life than he realized, much less would have wished to exer-

cise. Uncle Simon, sun-browned to the texture and hue of leather, sparse and dry, came through the chill November rain, and wiped his feet on the door-mat. Not a frequent visitor, Uncle Simon, disapproving of the minister, his brother-in-law; disapproving of Nancy, especially if she were likely to prove an old maid; and very chary of opening his purse-strings. Nancy had paused on the stairs with rapidly beating heart. Uncle Simon was discussing her delinquencies with grandmother.

"What ails the girl?" said the harsh, grating voice. "Lost one lover, and refused a better one, eh? Well, is the world to stop turning round on that account, while she is a cumberer of the ground, and a trial to her own father?"

Nancy leaned against the wall in the darkness, the apathy of her enchantment shivered by the lance of Uncle Simon's unsympathetic comment. A cumberer of the ground! A trial to father, who never complained! What record could she give of the wasted year? That night, while the old clock ticked solemnly, and Uncle Simon snored peacefully in the best bedroom, Nancy on her knees, with bitter weeping and passionate upbraiding, cast aside the old life, conquered, and began the new one resolutely. She came down to breakfast with a red bow in her hair; she paid remorseful attention to father in little duties long neglected; she anticipated grandmother with the work; she returned to the school-house with an energy akin to ardor, and held her pupils spell-bound with marvelous tales of the countries in their geography; and in her heart she perpetually thanked God for permitting her to live at all.

Briarbush, hanging up clothes in the yard of a morning, or coming from the store with a jug of molasses, made comment on Nancy in this wise: "I s'pose she's made up her mind, likely, to get along best she can now."

Thus the calm fell; stirred to its depths indeed when father died, by the great voiceless under-current of bereavement, yet Nancy, closing the lids of eyes no longer responsive, put away her dead, and every Sunday visited her grave on the hill-side. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," were the words traced on the tombstone of the good man who had not spent his days weighing his neighbors in the balance of his own narrow human judgment, nor in the heat of doctrinal controversy, but to whose coffin the children brought wreaths of wild flowers.

Land was fading, the sea sparkled, and the clatter of dishes and hum of voices still ascended through the sky-light to the deck where Miss Nancy sat almost alone. She drew from her traveling-bag a much-read letter with a half-smile, and looked at it. Thirteen years after father's death it had come to the old red homestead like a mighty shock, troubling peaceful lives. Uncle Simon was dead, had clutched his worldly goods to the last, and made no will. Nancy was next of kin. At last she held the key of a fairy casket full of wishes. What would she do? Briarbush stood on tiptoe; more than one widower in the community decided that Nancy was a "likely, capable sort of woman." Uncle Simon's money had dwindled through some mysterious drain, probably speculation; still the house remained, with its belongings, and was Nancy's very own. She would go and live in it—a landed proprietor; she would establish one of those genteel young ladies' seminaries peculiar to country towns, and make a small fortune for her old age at least. Nothing of the sort. She sold Uncle Simon's dominions, and came home with an East India box, a venerable cockatoo, two miniatures, and an arm-chair for grandmother saved from the wreck of auction. Then she would place the sum realized—three thousand dollars—in the bank, and draw interest. Not at all. From grandmother to the outskirts of the village, all Briarbush was horrified when the truth was revealed: Miss Nancy was going to travel in Europe.

"What will you do when your money is gone?" cried grandmother, aghast.

"Come home and earn some more," replied Nancy, with a sob of excitement. "I am going for father as well as myself."

Grandmother told her most intimate friends that Nancy was mad, had always been a trifle flighty, perhaps; and Briarbush, prepared to believe any thing now, viewed the culprit with the sternest disapproval, as if she were robbing some one, entrapped her into argument, told stories warningly of reckless extravagance, and the horrors of a penniless old age. Humphrey Baylis and his wife alone upheld her with the encouragement of probable enjoyment, they having already made a foreign tour. At this Briarbush pursed up its lips sourly, and affirmed that a rich mill-owner could do some things not expedient for a poor, single school-marm. However, Nancy went amidst cool farewells, and left Betty Hodges to take charge of grandmother for the term of her pilgrimage. Thus a second time had Uncle Simon caused a change in his niece's existence, himself the most unconscious instrument of destiny. Weighing the letter, which had wrought such a transformation for her, in her hand, musingly, Miss Nancy was startled by a voice in her ear.

"Nancy, I am glad to see you once more. I thought you had married Humphrey Baylis years ago," and the massive, stout gentleman was holding her hand the next moment in a mutual recognition.

"I did not marry Humphrey Baylis, if the

subject interests you," she returned, somewhat coldly.

Dr. Pierman coughed uneasily.

"We can not mend the past at our time of life. I regret—some things. Dear me! Have you had no dinner yet?"

"Thank you, I wish for none;" and then Miss Nancy gazed once more at the sea, that gate-way to the future.

CHAPTER III.

AT SEA.

THREE days out at sea, with a cloudy sky suggesting the possible fog of icebergs on the horizon, and the lead-colored waters chilling rapidly. Despite such disadvantages, the owners of deck-chairs reclined at ease, and grew hoarse in the rough wind, thus marking the line of superiority over those unfortunates unprovided with the luxury. Apparently, the loveliness of summer weather had vanished with the fading shore, and an intermediate stage of wretchedness had been reached—poised in the balance between the Old World and the New—when politeness wears off at a touch of *mal de mer*, and the primitive savage element grasps the best of every thing, finding a gloomy satisfaction in trampling on the rights of others. The American *enfant terrible*, prepared to make a summer tour of *table-d'hôte* and railway-carriage, to the astonishment of European civilization, which takes the babies to the sea-shore possibly, and otherwise consigns them to the nursery, tumbled about everywhere, Master Tommy Pierman in the vanguard. Shoals of pale, thin men seeking recreation were grouped about, and shoals of discontented women, for the most part wishing themselves safely home again, interspersed with such quaint figures as an old farmer, rustic in garb and wrinkled in feature, whose portrait might grace the walls of the Royal Academy, about whom clung the attractive story of money bequeathed by a death in America.

Mrs. Pierman was seated on the deck in her chair, wrapped in a rich India shawl, and turning the leaves of a fresh novel. Her mood was scarcely a happy one; her complexion had assumed a bluish pallor, and the curves of her mouth had acquired a dolorous downward droop. Mrs. Pierman had spent a sleepless night on a narrow shelf, in a box of a cabin with port-hole closed, and every vibration of the mighty screw beating on her spinal marrow as if she were a bell, and the machinery a tongue ringing out interminable changes of misery.

Certain sign-posts of travel, to be encountered in the experience of every one, assure the world that all is easy intercourse and friendly affability on shipboard. Is it so, indeed? Fain would we behold the fellow-passenger possessing sufficient temerity to address Mrs. Pierman, hedged about by a supercilious disdain of manner, the rich India shawl, the services of a French maid, and a gold vinaigrette, especially after that sleepless night in the stifling box of a cabin.

Her thoughts were not of the people around her, as she lounged there with half-closed eyes. The funny man told stories, passing from group to group, but Mrs. Pierman did not smile, although her husband, leaning against the bulwark smoking his cigar, laughed heartily now and then. The English commercial traveler played shuffle-board with the cynical Frenchman, who was turning his back on the States with a shrug of disdain; and the steerage—divided by the rope which rigidly marks social distinctions—watched the game listlessly, pipe in mouth, or with faded shawl gathered over an unkempt head. Mrs. Pierman heeded none of these things; even the disagreeable rencounter with Miss Nancy, which revived old and painful memories, lost effect amidst weightier considerations. Nancy belonged to the past, the fading, irrevocable past. Mrs. Pierman had made her own way in the world, and must still further attain certain ends. She chose to consider that her husband had no part in their elevation. Her money and her ambition had made the house of Pierman; not his skill as a practitioner, or character as a man.

All her watchfulness centred on the nearest door leading to the cabin, and three chairs, labeled respectively "L. C.," in white paint, were placed as if by accident beside her own. Persons on board the *Acis* who were ignorant of social distinctions, or who revolved in other smaller orbits of their own, might not have appreciated the importance those two letters had always possessed in Mrs. Pierman's creed. "L. C." had meant to her: climb higher, make a place for yourself and your children at the summit, even at the expense of money, thought, and wear of nerve-tissue, these ten years. In a word, be stamped as belonging to the choice circle of Mrs. Longueville Cocks, and rest supremely content ever afterward.

Mrs. Pierman, a haggard woman who seldom rested, was perpetually goaded from one exertion to another by an unflagging spirit, and then pitied herself for her multiplied cares. She had earned many a nervous headache in scheming fresh manœuvres whereby to attract the eye of Mrs. Cocks, and without success; for the latter lady, by virtue of having been born a Miss Bagatelle, acted as amused herself, was an eccentric patron of art, imported foreign customs, and indulged in caprices impossible to the envious. Behold, here they were brought together on shipboard! Carelessly had Mrs. Pierman arranged those chairs labeled L. C. next

to her own; eagerly did she watch the door, wondering if Mrs. Cocks would soon appear.

To whom will you be indebted for your own work one of these days, Mrs. Pierman? *Festina lente* was not the code of this feverish, irritable woman, who was incapable of checking the speed of these later years. She would not now turn back if she could.

Down-stairs, in cabin No. 15, Miss Nancy was donning her water-proof cloak preparatory to emerging on deck.

"You do not intend to wear that dress on shipboard, my dear?" she said to Blanche, in accents of astonishment.

That young lady was attired in purple velvet, with bewildering trimmings of silk and fur.

"Oh, this old thing! Why, it is my last winter's suit, and will be entirely out of fashion this year. We shall buy all our dresses in Paris before we return home, you know."

Miss Blanche put on a scarlet hood, just edged with a snowy fluffy down about her blooming face, and gave her raiment a careless adjustment. The night had not robbed either of these two of rest or good humor. Already they were firm friends, and Miss Nancy had patiently listened to innumerable confidences from her room-mate which were apt to die away in unintelligible, drowsy murmurs on the pillow above her head as the soft, childish lips finally closed in slumber. A vision of Margaret rose before Miss Nancy's remembrance at these evidences of extravagance in the daughter, literally born to the purple in her own estimation. In those old days at Briarbush, Margaret, the carpenter's child, had done well to obtain a faded muslin for summer Sundays, much starched and ironed.

Miss Nancy's resentment for this prank of fate in bringing them together had merged into interested speculation concerning John's daughter. She never could resist a young girl's face.

The scarlet hood was tied with a distracting little bow under a dimpled chin, and Miss Pierman turned back to remark, in a tone of triumphant conviction,

"There is a handsome young man on board."

"Only one handsome young man?" queried Miss Nancy, with a smile.

"I have discovered one. He has beautiful gray eyes and a flaxen mustache. He looks like a poet, or a German. Oh, I do hate Americans abroad, who are lank and awkward, and wear beards like a goat to make their faces sharper and longer! How funny we must look to other people, Miss Hawse!"

"We are what God has made us," said Miss Nancy.

"Yes," dubiously; "but don't you think we have something to do with our own appearance as well? God must have better occupation than noticing the fashion of men's beards. There, don't look shocked: I did not mean to be irreverent, only I always say whatever comes into my head. Guess what the name of my young man is."

"The German youth? You have learned that already, then."

Blanche laughed, and blushed a little, then put two slender hands over her own shell-like ears, safely hidden by the scarlet hood.

"One can not help hearing things sometimes. How does Mr. Denby sound, for instance?"

"It is not of so much importance how Mr. Denby sounds, my dear, as what Mr. Denby actually is," replied Miss Nancy, in her school-marm tone of admonition.

"Don't preach, please," said Blanche, entreatingly, and held up her sweet face to be kissed with the aspect of one sure of response.

How irresistibly winning John's daughter was! Miss Nancy raised the dimpled chin, and searched the face intently, as if in such a miniature fresh from the hand of nature she might find traces of those earlier days with the aid of memory. Her heart gave a little throb of exultation: there was no resemblance to Margaret Harrison's aquiline features discernible, but John's eyes, quick, flashing, mirthful, as in the old school-days of rambles after blackberries, and John's mouth, smaller, more refined, with the flexible curves.

"You are a dear old thing; and I seem to have always known you," observed the youth, with a charming audacity. "Perhaps it is because you and mamma were friends so long ago."

"Perhaps," said Miss Nancy, quietly.

Then they went on deck, and were caught in the eddy incident to the appearance of Mrs. Longueville Cocks at the very same moment.

Mrs. Pierman, watching keenly the cabin-door with increasing irritability of disappointment, first beheld an elderly man-servant laden with shawls and rugs fly through the portal, in a lurch of the vessel, and bring up against the bulwark, where he succeeded in collapsing two camp-chairs with their occupants by the suddenness of his advent. Next appeared a prim maid with a long waist and a sour visage, supporting Mrs. Cocks, while the stewardess closed up the rear with a glass of iced lemonade. Mrs. Cocks was a stout lady, with a pretty, infantile face, a double chin, and snowy hair piled high over a cushion in the Russian style, which, with further addition of bonnet, feathers, and bows, gave her the appearance of having a head much too large for her body.

Nowhere is Mammon worshiped more profoundly than on shipboard. Simultaneous-

ly the first surgeon and the captain made obsequious inquiry as to the condition of Mrs. Cocks's health; simultaneously Dr. Pierman and one of the previously collapsed ones rushed to adjust the great lady's chair. Rumor had already dealt with Mrs. Cocks's affairs—her man-servant, her maid-servant, the amount of luggage she carried, the probabilities of her being a millionaire at the very least, and how her hair was bleached in Paris.

"She was a Bagatelle, you know," every one said to every one else, and nobody dared either to question the fact, or profess ignorance of how it might seem to have been born one of that distinguished family.

Dimpling with ready smiles, Mrs. Cocks seated herself beside Mrs. Pierman, and responded to the latter's greeting most graciously. Oh yes, she recalled Mrs. Pierman perfectly; they were introduced at the Bangses' ball. Did Mrs. Pierman know if poor dear Mrs. Bangs still suffered from those frightful headaches? Just then a plain woman approached, and said,

"Good-morning, Margaret; I hope you slept well last night."

"Take this chair, Nancy," urged Dr. Pierman, cordially; and before his wife could possibly interpose, our traveler, who had addressed Mrs. Pierman by her first name, was made one of the party.

Not that Mrs. Pierman introduced Miss Nancy. Bless you, no! She had far too much *savoir faire* to betray that mark of ignorance, and suffered our poor school-mistress to feel the intrusion of her presence, her companions to hedge about in a desultory conversation if disposed, ignorant of each other's name or identity. Nothing can be more charmingly adopted to render human beings uncomfortable and ill at ease than this rule of etiquette. Mrs. Cocks only increased the anxiety of Mrs. Pierman by dimpling and smiling on Miss Nancy in a kindly and re-assuring manner. Good heavens! did the great lady imagine that Nancy was a member of the Pierman family, and that she must therefore be polite to her?

The pretty scarlet hood had appeared on deck; two young men hovered about Mrs. Cocks's chair, and she, with a gesture of one fat little hand, presented them to Miss Pierman. Mr. Rockwell Cocks, a very English-looking young American, and Mr. Denby bowed. Why did the bright face under the hood gain additional color at the greeting? Instantly Miss Nancy looked up, and encountered a glance of suppressed merriment in a pair of fine gray eyes on the part of the owner of the blonde mustache. Was this Blanche's hero? Why did he smile at her (Miss Nancy) in that peculiar way? To sit on a borrowed chair, with Mrs. Pierman's eye fixed disapprovingly on her for some unknown reason, and talk with a lady of whose name she was ignorant, was scarcely calculated to make Miss Nancy happy. She longed to escape to a quiet corner and be alone, had such a move been consistent with politeness. Dr. Pierman, perceiving her embarrassment, came to the rescue.

"Will you take a morning walk, Nancy?" he inquired, cheerfully; and she gladly consented to be led away to the upper deck.

The crowd did not allow of her escape, however, before she heard Mrs. Pierman's rather overanxious explanation:

"She is an old friend of my husband's from the country—a school-mistress. We meet quite by accident here."

"Ah!" returned Mrs. Cocks, "some of these country school-marms are so immensely clever and well read; they put us of the cities quite to shame by their superior knowledge."

"Yes," assented Mrs. Pierman, doubtfully.

Miss Nancy colored, and bit her lips; she was half minded to withdraw her hand from Dr. Pierman's arm, but he held it fast. It was hard for father's daughter to be termed only a school-mistress out in the world, and by a carpenter's offspring at that! The gentle distinction and deference accorded to the minister and his family had fostered in Nancy a degree of *amour propre* sadly ruffled by Mrs. Pierman's slighting words. Did John notice the remark? There was a slight frown on his brow, yet Nancy could not read his thoughts clearly. The novel situation was not without embarrassment also. Here were a man and woman who had once sworn, in the glow of youth, to love each other, who had been separated by fate, and now met again with more constraint than mere strangers. They paced the upper deck, passing the huge boilers—the gratings revealing fiery depths, where dusky shapes, like demons, wrangled and shouted and toiled over the furnaces—and conversed on indifferent subjects. The man who had gone forth to win himself a niche in the world had not yet reverted to Briarbush and that sealed book of mutual estrangement. He had inquired after the minister's health.

"He is dead," Nancy had answered, with a tremor in her firm voice.

He had heard the tidings in absolute silence, all conventional formulas of condolence failing on his lips. Did he see himself, a careless boy, wandering with father in the woods, seeking the shy wild flowers and fragile ferns, before care or thought drew the lines on his face, and silvered the hair about his temples? This lack of response did not offend Nancy: in the depths of her soul, she understood, fathomed it.

Had they met on shore, the chances were that each would have avoided the other with a degree of cowardice in shrinking from the disagreeable encounter. They might have lived in the same street as next-door neighbors for years, and the boundary of mutual

reserve not have been passed. Here all was different, and after the first day propinquity ceased to be painful, for other, softer influences were at work. Dr. Pierman had led a busy life, absorbed in the studies of his profession, and driven into society by that little stinging lash of Mrs. Pierman's restless ambition. Insensibly he was drawn into that swift current down which she was hastening: he must be rich, great, powerful. He was proud of his wife and his children; he was absorbed by a thousand cares; the image of Nancy Hawse, a folly of his boyhood, associated with pique and distrust, was set aside in weariness, and forgotten. When Blanche was put into his arms, a rosy baby, dimpling with smiles, he had wondered, with a scornful exultation, if the first-born of the pair at Briarbush would possess such beauty.

"Baylis is a good fellow, but very plain. Well, she made her own choice," he had said, and kissed the baby's cheek, soft as a rose-leaf.

On board the *Acis* he had the leisure which would not have been vouchsafed him at home to consider the affairs of his old sweetheart. Nancy had not married the rich mill-owner's son. He would have liked to question her on the mystery, only delicacy and something in the gray eyes of the middle-aged woman withheld him. Mrs. Pierman had been questioned by her husband quickly, and a trifle sternly.

"Why did not Nancy Hawse marry as you said?"

"How should I know?" retorted the lady, flushing angrily. "I presume she grew weary of the bargain, and withdrew, unless he did."

Nothing more was said between husband and wife, and Mrs. Pierman had retired to one of her sleepless nights afterward on the shelf of a berth.

Walking now on the upper deck, he thought of the matter, as he explained routes of travel to his companion. The scarlet hood moved hither and thither, according to the impulse of the gay wearer, who claimed the homage of Rockwell Cocks and Mr. Denby, with the security of merry eighteen.

"Mont Cenis is certainly the best route," said Dr. Pierman, pausing by the railing to watch his daughter with a smile of lenient admiration.

"I have thought of going via Marseilles," said Miss Nancy, also smiling at the wearer of the scarlet hood, who was toying with a flower for which both her cavaliers were pleading in the half-jesting, half-earnest way two young men may assume when rivalry gives a spicy flavor to the contest.

The girl's manner was a revelation, amusing and startling to the self-absorbed father. Blanche, the child who ran to meet him at night, who perched on his knee and begged new toys, with ready trick of gesture and arch glances, was undeniably flirting with mankind. His child had escaped from the chrysalis of home, and was already spreading the rainbow-tinted pinions of her maidenhood.

"It makes me feel old," said John Pierman, half absently, and yet with the once-familiar feeling stealing back that talking with Nancy was but thinking aloud.

"We must all learn to make way for another generation," returned Nancy, in a low tone of musing. To her this being set aside for the new race had a keener pang, both from her womanhood and her lonely condition.

The demons wrangled in the fiery depths below the grating, the machinery throbbed. An old gentleman, wrapped in a gray coat, paced the dock restlessly, presenting to Miss Nancy at every turn a sharp, thin nose of unusual length, a keen, quick eye, and a silvered Vandyck beard. Pretty Blanche, after coquetting about her rose-bud with the two cavaliers, ran up to this old gentleman, and presented it to him instead. Then she accepted the arm of Mr. Rockwell Cocks, and tripped away with never a backward glance at the golden mustache she had professed to admire in the cabin only an hour ago.

"The sly puss!" exclaimed Dr. Pierman.

He raised his hat to the old gentleman in gray, who was adjusting the trophy in his button-hole with a frosty smile.

"That person is a millionaire; and a great card it is to have him travel by this line," he added, in explanation to Miss Nancy.

Noting the sharp features, the Vandyck beard, the stooping figure, and shabby felt hat, she returned,

"I should esteem him a very insignificant man in appearance."

Dr. Pierman smoothed his mustache.

"It does not always serve to judge by appearance in this world. Our shabby fellow-traveler could buy us all up, I suspect."

"What is he?" demanded Miss Nancy.

"Oh, every thing in one individual—railway king, stock-jobber, land-owner, rentier, and banker," replied Dr. Pierman.

She could never explain her impulse, but Miss Nancy turned once more to observe the old gentleman in gray, who wore Blanche's rose-bud, and he returned her glance with the sweeping criticism of one used to the study of physiognomy. Dr. Pierman's next words were uttered in the low, musing key Nancy had recently adopted.

"I remember the roses which grew about your grandmother's door. How sweet they were—old-fashioned damask roses!"

"The vine is dead also," said Nancy, steadily, and gazed at the horizon-line of leaden waters.

The second young gentleman, Mr. Denby,

had joined the millionaire in his promenade with such grace as he might muster when left behind by a young lady.

"If there is another decent-looking girl on board, I will devote myself to her next time," he decided, quite fiercely, watching the scarlet hood with the most unreasonable resentment.

Again the old man in the gray coat smiled, like a gleam of sun on the windows of a deserted house.

Dr. Pierman and his companion were recalled from the upper deck by a catastrophe.

The Big Boy is in every condition of life a loadstone, a star of exalted aspiration to the juvenile mind, to be followed and imitated with ardor by all the little men permitted to bask in his glory. On board the *Acis* the Big Boy was chubby, with stout legs incased in knickerbockers, and many metallic buttons on his raiment. He wore his cap with a knowing air; his ruddy *nez retroussé* was always elevated, as if scenting fresh perils into which to drag his infatuated satellites; his merry eyes were brimming with mischief; he was always hungry, and his spirits never flagged. Master Tommy Pierman followed this illustrious leader like a somnambulist. If the Big Boy climbed to the bridge and hung himself head downward like a monkey, the contents of his pockets raining on the deck below, Master Tommy did likewise. The Big Boy made playful lunges at the deck stewards, and Tommy received the scalding soup on his shoulders. The leader ascended the rigging, while the satellite, clutching the ropes, began to cry, and had to be ingloriously rescued by a sailor, while the Big Boy danced a jig, hands in pockets, and laughed cruelly at such cowardice. Had the Big Boy led the way down one of the boilers as the crater of a volcano, Tommy would have followed if only to increase the smoke. The novelty of the field, or the vanity acquired by success in all his perilous deeds, led the Big Boy to feel that the eye of the world was upon him.

While Mrs. Pierman and Mrs. Cocks conversed affably, reclining in their large chairs, a shadow passed over them unheeded; it was the Big Boy extended along a beam like a frog, working his way in an acrobatic fashion to no given point in particular, with much expenditure of muscular force. Had not Mrs. Pierman been absorbed, she might have been alarmed by the expression in her son's eye. With dogged determination, Tommy sprung at the post, and launched himself on a new task. Little scarlet legs followed the sturdy blue legs with desperate valor.

"You can't do it, young 'un," observed the Big Boy, tauntingly, and seated himself on a cross-bar to rest.

"See if I don't!" cried Tommy, shrilly, and breathing hard.

Lo! the small scarlet legs scaled the height, slipped, and with a very frightened face Master Pierman slid rapidly down the post until he landed precisely on the head of Mrs. Longueville Cocks. Horrible accident! Why of all heads did the *enfant terrible* select that one, ornamented with bows, ribbons, and plumes, owned by the great lady? Mrs. Cocks was for the moment extinguished; the chair, rugs, and shawls toppled over in inextricable confusion: the sour maid with a long waist rushed to the rescue; the care-worn man-servant, who had withdrawn to a box behind the cabin-door and the discussion of a glass of beer, was summoned in all haste. When Mrs. Cocks emerged to view, her infantile placidity was gone, her countenance suffused, her charming white hair awry. She received Mrs. Pierman's profuse apologies with a degree of *hauteur*, and, motioning her people to gather up her wraps, withdrew.

"I didn't mean to," whimpered Tommy.

In the mean while the Big Boy sat up aloft grinning, and when a favorable opportunity occurred he formed a trumpet of his hands, and ejaculated, "I told you so, young 'un!"

The sorrows of childhood are short-lived, however. Before Mrs. Cocks had restored her demolished coiffure with the aid of her maid below stairs, Tommy had dried his eyes on his jacket-cuff, and was edging along on the wooden partition which divided the glass sky-light above the saloon table. This performance required the nicest adjustment of balance; a rope-dancer might have achieved it, and the Big Boy had nearly passed in safety. What more natural than that Tommy's heel should slip at a critical moment, and he clutching at the Big Boy for support, they both should disappear through the skylight amidst a crash of glass, like Harlequin in the pantomime? This was the climax which brought Dr. Pierman down from the upper deck amidst a general uproar. Master Tommy appeared no more that day. He was rumored to be uninjured, save for a few bruises, and was subsequently held in durance vile in his own cabin.

The Big Boy emerged with a few scratches and unimpaired cheerfulness.

"I never did it; he grabbed me; that's all," protested the leader, and walked away, whistling blithely, in search of new adventures.

Mrs. Pierman greeted her husband, tears of anger in her eyes.

"Will you inquire for Mrs. Cocks, if you can leave the society of Nancy Hawse long enough," she asked, sharply.

"How can you be so unreasonable, Margaret?" he said, soothingly.

No doubt she was nervous, and shocked by Tommy's accident; the other supposition was too absurd. Miss Nancy approached in all haste, and was snubbed by the humiliated mother.

The old man in the gray coat still wore Blanche's rose in his button-hole; Mr. Denby watched the scarlet hood move about with Rockwell Cocks; and after Tommy's condition was reported there was peace.

Thus the day wore on, and the *Acis* moved steadily forward with all the power of steam, and neither sky nor sea gave warning of approaching doom.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO YOUNG MEN.

ANOTHER morning dawned cold and raw, without sunshine, and the mist-enveloped horizon still denoted the vicinity of ice-fields. Blanche Pierman, in her purple-velvet jacket and little red hood, stood alone, grasping a railing for support, and swaying lightly to the motions of the ship; the wind sweeping aside her draperies now and then, as if purposely to play the mad prank of revealing a pair of tiny feet neatly shod. The girl looked very pretty in her bright-tinted dress, a soft bloom stole into her cheeks in the fresh air, and all the roguish glee of innocent good-humor, perfect health, untrammeled mind and heart, lurked in the depths of her brown eyes. They were changeful, gleaming eyes, lacking repose and steadiness, devoid of that full, large sincerity of expression which can never be accepted as indicating honesty of character after one has encountered the limpid, unfaltering Italian gaze, but with transient golden lights and sparkles like the surface of a brook winding beneath the shadow of a hill. Robbed of her silken plumage, Blanche would have been described as a slim girl with a fair skin and a pair of big eyes.

Observing her swaying there alone and unprotected, what more natural than that Howard Denby, also taking a morning walk before breakfast, should hasten to the rescue?

"Good-morning, Miss Pierman. You are also an early riser, it seems," he said, approaching her.

"You see me at my best, then," laughed Blanche, the large eyes scintillating with those slumbering lights. "I am not famous for that virtue at home, Mr. Denby; but one can not sleep all the time at sea."

"Will you take a walk on the upper deck?" offering his arm.

"Yes, with pleasure, only how cold and forlorn it is!" laying a small hand incased in lavender kid on his sleeve. "Other people have perpetual sunshine on the voyage. I wish that we could be favored with an iceberg, at least."

"Do not say so, even in jest," replied the young man, with a slight shudder. "None of us know the awful mysteries shrouding the passage of these crystal towers over the ocean."

Perhaps he was fond of influencing other young minds by the coloring of his own thoughts. There is a charm in being able to replace a smile by a frown, or the gravity of kindling alarm. Howard Denby was neither a sombre nor a morbid youth; the remark might have escaped him unawares, carelessly; and so sensitive a nerve-tissue is vanity, ever ready to kindle into flaming jealousy in a young man, that one of those little cross threads of whim, such as Blanche's acceptance of the escort of Rockwell Cocks the previous day, may have clouded gayety. He felt the comparison more keenly than the occasion warranted, because he had need to accept life seriously. Some sage has pronounced poverty a shirt of fire; certainly proud poverty detects slights in the insolent, and chafes over neglects never intended. Now, Howard Denby was very poor indeed.

Blanche was undaunted; the color bloomed deeper in her cheeks, she clung with pretty confidence to the arm of her escort; and the tiny feet were well outlined, arched instep and slender ankle freed by the ruder winds of the upper deck from the concealing robe.

"I am determined not to regard the iceberg in that gloomy fashion," she said, merrily, with her ever-ready, rippling laughter, which was infectious in gayety and musical to the ear. "If I could only see one kindling in the sunset with lovely hues—for instance, rose color at the summit, and melting to pale-blue tints at the base—I would make it my fairy castle, and sail away in it over the seas." The brilliant eyes grew dark, clouded, wistful.

"Would you sail away alone?" queried Mr. Denby, smiling.

Blanche's mouth assumed demure downward curves.

"I would take my father and mother," she answered, gravely.

"Any one else?" with a roguish glance.

"Possibly Miss Nancy Hawse, my roommate."

"Might not a German or a poet be added to the select company in the frozen paradise?"

Blanche glanced up at him with quick suspicion. Where had he heard that before?

"Oh dear, no," she replied, promptly, and studied him askance.

Fancy may poise on gauzy wings, even above the gratings redolent of hot oil, and noisy with the strife of demons in glowing depths below. Howard Denby stooped over his companion from his tall height, and said, softly,

"I should like to be one of your guests."

Harmless jest and banter! Insidious

sweetness of propinquity, delicious suggestiveness of thought veiled in small talk. It was a handsome face, unnecessarily handsome for a man, Blanche decided, as she considered that her own sex should monopolize all beauty, with that transparent purity of complexion which belonged to the yellow hair and mustache and gray eyes, where little of boyish *insouciance* remained to twenty-five. She felt a thrill of wonder, and interest born of curiosity, at the outset; then the golden lights sparkled up in her eyes, like effervescent bubbles rising from the clear depths of a forest spring, and she answered, archly,

"Would you choose to come—surely not without an invitation, though?"

Here was the very trick of expression which had amazed her father on the previous day. She had talked sheer nonsense with Rockwell Cocks—indeed, the average small talk of the world is such—but here was nonsense fraught with some subtle meaning, intangible, evanescent, scarcely to be considered a reality. Possibly Fancy, hovering there, just brushed the two young people with her radiant pinions then.

At this moment the Young Lady appeared, and claimed Mr. Denby's attention with sparkling vivacity of manner. The Young Lady, like the Big Boy, was a feature on board the *Acis*, and Howard Denby, smarting under that defection of the scarlet hood yesterday, had fallen into the toils of the siren, who had not afterward permitted his escape. The Young Lady knew every body, had been everywhere, was always on the wing, there being no rest for the sole of her foot on this earth's surface; and she usually headed the list of fashionable arrivals in several different portions of the temperate zone annually. Her hair was of a reddish gold, suggestive of copper solutions, and tied in a cue behind; her complexion bore traces of many campaigns beneath the gas-light; her waist, of agonizing smallness, sloped outward to shoulders of fine breadth, usually shrugged with cynical indifference; and she never moved without a waft of perfume, and dragging a serpentine train of rich fabric behind her. Her toilets came from Worth, her furs from Siberia, her cameos from Venice, her lace from the Ghetto, her amethysts from Regent Street. In a word, the Young Lady was a successful creature, who openly scoffed at her own sex as bores, yawning at the matrons, and detesting school-girls, while she was never happy without one or more gentlemen in attendance. Her celebrity was something worth attaining; she scorned matrimony without being strong-minded; and she was known to have declined an eligible offer in order to make her first tour around the world.

"Good-morning, Mr. Denby," she cried, in her high, clear voice; "I will wager that your friend Rockwell Cocks has not yet risen even to brandy-and-soda, after late hours in the smoking-room. Oh, you naughty men! how I envy you those evenings in the snug quarters allotted you, while we poor women may bestow ourselves anywhere. How are you, Miss Pierman?"

The Young Lady was never at a loss for a name, and if she had kept a secretary to register her floating debt of acquaintances, the position would have been no sinecure. Blanche responded stiffly. What right had the Young Lady to join them in that fashion, and claim the attention of Howard Denby? Indeed, she seemed only to await Blanche's departure to take his arm, and move away with him.

"Perhaps she has more claim on his consideration than I have," thought the little maid, hotly; and then the picture of Rockwell Cocks sleeping off last night's late hours in the smoking-room came before her with painful vividness.

Had he been drunk like the men she had seen reeling in the streets? Shocking idea! The Young Lady had mentioned brandy-and-soda as if the beverage were morning milk or spring water.

"Do not allow me to detain you; I see papa," said Blanche, with sudden *hauteur*, and crossed the deck to receive Dr. Pierman's morning salutation.

"What a stiff little piece!" observed the conquering siren, gazing reflectively after her rival, and then slipped her hand through Mr. Denby's arm with a degree of triumph in her victory. "All misses just out of school are like that, however."

"I think her very lovely," observed Howard Denby, gravely.

"Ah, blows the wind in that quarter, my friend?" said the Young Lady, with a shrug of amusement.

She felt no particular animosity toward Blanche, she had merely set the younger girl aside for her own pleasure, and a vast experience had taught her means whereby to achieve such an end. She never doubted for a moment Mr. Denby's preference for her own accomplished society: school-girls were so tame and insipid. This comfortable panoply of self-conceit buoyed up the Young Lady in angry waters oftentimes, when she would otherwise have felt the sharp contact of underlying rocks. Blanche ran over to her father, like the child she was.

"Papa, they say that Rockwell Cocks drank too much wine last night. Is it true, dear?" she inquired, eagerly.

Dr. Pierman took his daughter in his arms—they were concealed by the smoke-stack—and kissed her.

"I think ill of young people who repeat idle tales to my darling," he said, in a disapproving tone. "No doubt such gossip is false."

"You disbelieve it?" questioned Blanche, who was unaccountably shocked and startled, nestling closer to him.

"Of course I do. Some tattling nonsense!" And Dr. Pierman, on whom Howard Denby had previously made only the vaguest impression, forthwith formed an unfavorable opinion of that young man. What right had the intimate friend of Rockwell Cocks to gossip with girls about him? Such conduct was simply contemptible. The kind father resented having the innocence of his child's youth rudely dispelled. Tommy must fall through sky-lights, and scramble up again as best he might, being a boy; but the delicate bloom, the folded petals of Blanche's maidenhood must be religiously guarded in a tender and wise protection, if she was actually grown up, a fact he was reluctant to believe.

The girl took his hand between both of her own, and kissed it impulsively.

"You old darling!" she said, softly. "There is no man in the world as good as my own father."

Dr. Pierman did not in the least object to this adoring homage.

An hour later Blanche Pierman was seated at breakfast next Miss Nancy, and astonished that lady by the shrewd worldly wisdom of her observations. The Young Lady entered drawing off her gloves, and paused to greet the first-officer in a hail-fellow-well-met fashion. Howard Denby followed, and looked anxiously toward a certain little head crowned with rippling brown hair; but the owner, Blanche, kept her eyes fixed on her plate.

"How nice it would be if one could make the world all over according to one's own fancy!" said Blanche, presently, poising a morsel of roll meditatively, as if weighing the matter in a balance.

"Convert the rivers into mountains, and the valleys into seas," suggested Miss Nancy, taking a geographical view of the subject.

"You dear, tiresome school-mistress!" responded Blanche, elevating her eyebrows. "The rivers and mountains are well enough!"

"You are good to be satisfied with the present distribution of such matters," interposed Miss Nancy, ironically.

"Do not blight my poor little efforts at conversation with sarcasm," pursued Blanche. "I have no fault to find with our globe; it is the people who inhabit it, *voyez-vous?*"

"Ah, my dear, how I wish you could cure all the wickedness!" said Miss Nancy, with a sigh of regret.

"I would make all the good and handsome people rich—oh, so very rich! and the bad, mean, homely people should all be beggars," said Blanche, blithely.

"Do you care for riches?" inquired Miss Nancy, in her tone of admonition.

"Oh yes, indeed! We can not live without money, you know," responded the soft rosy lips.

"We need to be fed and clothed, I suppose you mean," said Miss Nancy, stoutly. "I can not believe that you would really value gold in respect to persons, and in comparison with better, higher aims."

"For instance?" asked Blanche, perversely, elevating her chin a trifle.

"Well, for instance: you would not consider wealth in love or marriage."

"Oh, but I should! I could never marry a man without money," said the worldly wisdom of eighteen.

"You are jesting," replied Miss Nancy, soberly. "I can not believe that you are so silly in an earnest mood."

Blanche regarded her with dilating, astonished eyes, and a scarcely perceptible bridling of the neck. Silly! This was the creed in which her mother was rearing her. No doubt Miss Nancy dwelt in Arcadia, and fed on milk and honey. Still, she colored, and was silent. At eighteen one does not relish being accused of allowing one's tongue to run away with one's wits, especially by an elder.

"I advise you to try the cutlets," said Dr. Pierman, across the table. "How earnestly you two converse! May I be taken into your confidence?"

He liked to see his daughter with Nancy, especially as his wife did not appear in the morning, and a part of the fatality of this meeting on board the *Acis* was that the same table was apportioned to these once friends, and there was no escape for the traveler from Briarbush save in the seclusion of her berth, or the precarious ministrations of a deck steward. Accordingly, Miss Nancy stood by her guns, and sat opposite Margaret Pierman during interminable dinners which the latter spent in disdaining the viands, and scrutinizing her *vis-à-vis* with that half-absent contemplation which the object feels in the spinal marrow.

Blanche rallied her spirits quickly.

"Miss Hawse was saying, papa, that she had never met your equal," she said, roguishly.

"I am flattered," replied Dr. Pierman, flushing slightly.

A wave of color swept over poor Miss Nancy's throat and cheeks.

"How can you be so mischievous?" she faltered, aghast at this unexpected bit of fun.

"What have I done?" exclaimed Blanche. "How oddly you both appear! Oh, my wicked tongue!"

Constrained silence succeeded, the sharp young eyes searching the two elderly faces. There was a hum of voices, the clash of crockery, stewards moving about in the steam of the dishes they bore, and every now and then the sea dashed against the

closed port-holes, and the contents of the tables were hurled from side to side. The British nobleman in rough tweed garments, and his wife in water-proof Ulster, sipped their tea quietly in one corner. The English author, about to publish his opinion of the States, made mental notes of the company over a boiled egg. The loquacious Congressman, who had passed a bill last session at the expense of his bronchial tubes, conversed fluently with the bishop who aspired to preaching a sermon in Westminster Abbey. Howard Denby, placed by fate at the antipodes — the other extremity of the saloon — caught occasional glimpses of the bright little head as it turned with bird-like curves from side to side. How had he offended Blanche? He was acutely alive to Dr. Pierman's cold greeting also.

Avoiding the young lady dexterously after breakfast, he sought a corner of the smoking-room where he would escape her notice, and lighted his cigar. Thus yielding to his own reflections, while the clouds of smoke screened him somewhat from his companions, the young man, Howard Denby, became a totally different person from the Young Lady's attendant, whiling away the hours in idle badinage. He glanced out of the window at ocean and sky without seeing either object; his gaze roved uncomprehendingly over the other men about him; the very sense of hearing was dull because he had forgotten himself. Blessed oblivion to external objects, when the mind shrouds its own mysteries from the prying scrutiny of the universe! If every mortal could seek and find this self-absorption in harmless schemes, even if thought bore no fruition, there would be less of mischief-making everywhere. Clothed in this armor, Dr. Pierman's coldness, all the petty stings of annoyance in the very friction of a crowd, could not wound. Howard Denby had simply passed beyond them. The gray eyes grew keen, veins in the temples became visible, there was repressed power about the mouth and chin, half concealed by a drooping mustache. Here was no poetic dreamer wrapped in reverie, but one prepared to act, gathering his forces for a spring if the time ever came.

He took from his pocket a Russia-leather book bound in silver, and consulted the contents as if the leaves contained the key to some riddle he was determined to solve.

Ten years before the grocer's wife had said,

"He is there still; God help him!"

She had then gone behind the counter, and weighed a pound of moist brown sugar in the scales for Mrs. Flaherty, the washerwoman around the corner, a good customer when business was brisk.

"There's many like him, and there'll be many more this winter," grumbled the grocer, making change in his till with innumerable coppers.

When the place was cleared, the grocer's wife again went to the door and peered out. The shop was located in a poor neighborhood enough, the rows of brick houses opposite were dingy, and with many broken shutters. Night was gathering, cold and dark, with sombre clouds threatening snow, and a bitter wind sweeping the dust in eddies around the corners.

A tall boy, poorly clad, and with his cap drawn down over his eyes, stood with his back to the grocer's window, gazing at a third story of the opposite house, as he had been standing for an hour previously. The grocer's wife applied her apron to her own pale face stealthily, for her lord and master hated tears. There stood the lank boy in the gathering twilight, gazing at the house where his mother had died three days before, and from which he had been expelled. The grocer's wife was a poor woman, much burdened with debt and care; the shop was in an unfashionable quarter known as the "East Side;" and the city was New York.

Without were the darkening street, the dingy opposite house, the lonely figure of the boy: within were a boarded floor, strewed with sawdust, a small counter, ornamented with a cut cheese; and rows of boxes of raisins, bottles of green pickles, and other delicacies, reaching to a low ceiling hung with hams. Beyond was a glimpse of a humble living-room enough, but where burned a cheerful fire with savory suggestions of a family supper by-and-by. A little girl, with rough hair and a freckled face, pulled her mother's gown.

"Shall I take him a bit of bread-and-butter?" she whispered, eagerly.

"It's a cold night," said the grocer's wife, glancing over her shoulder toward her husband.

"Eh—so it is," responded the man, gruffly, and walked straight to the door.

"Come in and warm yourself," he said to the tall boy, who obeyed mechanically, and spread his thin hands to the welcome fire.

The grocer was used to all phases of poverty, whining mendicancy, and disreputable indebtedness; but the boy perplexed him. He pushed aside feebly the offering of Maggy M'Guire; his face was pallid and worn, his eyes sunken with famine and grief.

"Where are you going?" demanded the grocer.

"I don't know," murmured the boy.

Mrs. M'Guire came to his side with a bowl of hot tea, bid him be seated and drink, with quick womanly instinct of his need.

"Anyhow you can sleep here to-night," said the grocer, and afterward repented of such rash generosity, since the boy could sleep only under the counter of his shop.

Mrs. M'Guire met these objections with,

"Shure, his mother was a rale lady from the look of her, and he won't thieve."

Very low down in the world, left by an ebb-tide of misfortune on such a shore! Mr. M'Guire, grocer, feared to trust Howard Denby, born a gentleman, at the age of fifteen, and looked after his money-box with unusual care that night. Afterward, for three years, Howard Denby slept beneath that humble counter, and was a member of the grocer's household. It was a sorry training, but it had its uses. Opposite was the house in which his mother had died; and when he looked up at her windows his spirit rose within him, all his nature strained at the chains of necessity which curbed him. Was life to mold him, or could he grasp and conquer life? They had lived for years in these dirty, reeking streets, mother and son, hidden from the world. The boy had scarcely known a better existence. There was no disgrace in their hiding; they had merely stranded on the reefs of Want since the brawl in which Howard's father had perished. The father was a drunkard, a spendthrift. Something of the terror of her tardy discovery lingered in his mother's delicate face, and was stamped by reflection for years on Howard's own features. All blame was her own: she had married the stranger in her distant Southern home against the advice of her kinsfolk, and they had virtuously washed their hands of the matter.

That was all! Years of sorrow and pain, years of weary endurance and need. Mrs. Denby taught music in little brick houses, odorous of cabbage, on jangling pianos. Her wrecked life had two aims—to educate her son, and to keep him from an hereditary love of drink. In the first breath of cruel winter she had died, the rent was unpaid, and Howard Denby, aged fifteen, was turned out into the street without money or friends.

The three years in service of Mr. M'Guire, grocer, were spent in mornings at the great district school of the ward, a teeming hive; and the rest of the day and evening were devoted to the interests of trade. Mr. M'Guire was a surly benefactor with views of his own; Howard was older and stronger than his sons. The boy paid his way. Maggy M'Guire had grown into a slim girl who put up her hair, and showed a fondness for neck-ribbons. She would not have objected to a flirtation with Howard, merging into the rash settlements for life peculiar to that neighborhood, where young people launched recklessly into matrimony on nothing a year. The household was harmonious enough. Adversity and the chilling depression of his childhood had robbed Howard of buoyant gayety. He was grateful to Mrs. M'Guire; he performed his duties with the careful precision of a machine; he gave no confidences, and minded his own business.

"Why don't ye win the prize, and gain the cadetship?" said Mr. M'Guire, abruptly, one evening, resting his hands on his knees, and studying the boy much as he had done on that first night years ago.

"I will try," said Howard, with a sudden flash in his gray eye. The flash meant hope, and seeing a way out of it all.

Now, Mr. M'Guire was a soured man, whose visions had been rudely dispelled on landing in America. He came of a highly respectable family, his father being a tenant-farmer; he was an Orangeman, and was both thrifty and industrious; yet the sober imagination of Mr. M'Guire had not been proof against dazzling visions of golden harvests to be reaped without toil, even on the very wharves of New York City. A grim reality had been the small grocery, a battle with debt, an increasing family. Mr. M'Guire sought refuge in politics with a deeply seated resentment toward the rich, envy taking the form of personal grievance, and became chairman of a society of grumblers, meeting in the rear of a dram-shop. This society wore a national badge, and struck roots deep into the soil.

The right of a military cadetship having been accorded to that great hive, the ward free-school, Mr. M'Guire would fain have a finger in making the first cadet. His own son and heir was hopelessly addicted to playing truant, and whiling away the precious hours of youth with marbles in the gutter. Howard Denby was a student, and should have it. The ward adopted him; the society upheld his claim fiercely: the rich people up town should see if they were always to trample on the poor.

Thus Mr. M'Guire became, from mixed motives of good and evil, the powerful lever in the life of Howard Denby, deserted by his own class. He carried off the prize, and was praised for his cleverness by gentlemen on the platform. Mr. M'Guire, in a very stiff shirt-collar, attended the examination with a dogged and suspicious aspect. Afterward a hat circulated in the society for the orphan's benefit. Howard said, doubtfully,

"Will they let me make guns at West Point, or do any thing I choose?"

The grocer thought him a fool, or mad.

"Make guns! It's learning to pint and fire 'em, my boy, ye'll be after knowing there," he said.

Mrs. M'Guire and Maggy wiped their eyes.

"Ye'll be forgetting us poor folks now," said the good woman, who had taken him in out of the streets, homeless and friendless, that sad night now belonging to the past.

Howard colored high, and threw back his head.

"People do not forget the only friends they have in the world," he said, with dignity, and then he kissed them both.

Mrs. M'Guire noted the cut of his military jacket anxiously; but Maggy flushed and trembled as his lips touched her own.

The public-school candidate passed with credit, entered West Point, and after that a stylish young man in gray sometimes visited the grocery in the city street to be admired, with an ever-increasing difference between himself and his friends marking his growth. It happened that when he passed through that ordeal of examination which changes the whole current of many a youth's life, another candidate also bore the test, a candidate for whom the path of boyhood had been made as smooth by circumstance as Howard's had been made rough. This pupil was Rockwell Cocks, indolent, assured, selfish, with an adoring mother thirsting for military honors to be showered on an only son.

Two years later, Howard Denby, hitherto studious and quiet in demeanor, was dismissed the Academy in disgrace. There was no palliation for his offense; he had been caught in the very act of committing an unpardonable misdemeanor one night, had flamed into angry denial of his guilt at first, and, when circumstantial evidence proved overwhelmingly against him, had taken refuge in a sullen silence which remained unshaken. Once more turned out into the world, Howard Denby did not seek refuge with Mr. M'Guire, although something of the grocer's envy poisoned his heart with bitterness. Luck was against him. The wheel of fortune must have revolved before he was born, in order to crush him to the earth. The disgrace of his dismissal was like the lash of a whip in his face, a gnawing pain in his soul, to be fiercely resented, to feel tingling through every nerve fibre. With such a nature, Howard Denby, when an old man, might still flush in keen remembrance of the insult; in hot youth it was simply galling, unendurable. This revolt against fate transpired while he was the petted guest of Mrs. Longueville Cocks in a fine house, which was a paradise of luxury and wonder to the boy, used only to humble poverty.

Rockwell Cocks had discovered that Howard Denby was a useful ally in irksome tasks; was himself a generous and lavish youth; and had brought him home one holiday, when shy, proud Howard was discovered to be the son of Mrs. Cocks's schoolfriend. Never had poor Mrs. Denby sought the once Miss Bagatelle; but the latter, bridging over forgetful years, filled only with a hazy impression that school-friend Maria had made a wretched marriage and vanished somewhere, could receive a handsome youth in gray on her hearth-stone, and make much of him with true kindness and perception of his weaknesses. Howard could have duped and deceived Mrs. Cocks to any extent, because she fancied that she had detected in him genius. Mrs. Cocks was as wax in the hands of a genius.

It would seem that Rockwell Cocks was much concerned by the departure of his friend: he wrote letters to his mother urging her to keep Howard with her until he obtained leave, and could see them. Mrs. Cocks needed no urging to adopt this course, her nature overflowed to Maria's son; but he would by no means remain a captive in that house, lined with mirrors and wondrous cabinets, rich in books, statuary, and pictures. Inaction chafed him; a sense of failure, humiliation, and disgrace held him aloof even from sour Mr. M'Guire, to whom he must be also a disappointment. He was like a bird in a gilded cage, starving for need of proper food. Before Rockwell Cocks obtained that much-desired leave, Howard Denby had enlisted in the volunteer navy with the enforced aid of his benefactress, and sailed away to the Gulf.

Six months later there was another frolic, and Rockwell Cocks was also expelled, when he explained to his mother that he was the culprit in the first instance, and Howard Denby was so unfortunate as to incur the appearance of guilt through companionship with him.

"He never told on me, and he is a brick," quoth Rockwell, laughing; "all the same, I am the black sheep, and he might be there now for a slow coach."

The second youth took the matter with no secret chafings against fate; he mocked at his misfortune, played billiards, acquired a fondness for Champagne suppers, and openly ridiculed the matter at his club. No disgrace of this sort could be attached to Rockwell Cocks. Mrs. Cocks sighed, and took her son abroad.

For five years Howard Denby was as one dead to all who had ever known him. Mrs. Cocks found leisure, amidst the claims of fashionable life, to wonder at his silence, and search newspaper files for possible tidings of him. Down in their noisy, dirty street, the M'Guires noted the lapse of time, and often discussed the once pensioner on their bounty around the family fire, where Maggy brought her baby. Maggy had not waited to win Howard's coy admiration, but in the heyday of her maidenhood had accepted a young mechanic, who was her partner at the annual fireman's ball.

On board the *Acis*, a tall young man, with a blonde mustache, accosted Mrs. Cocks, who gave him two little fat hands in glad recognition.

"You naughty boy, to forget us all so long!" she exclaimed. "Now we have found you again, you shall not escape us in Europe."

"You travel for pleasure; I must work," he replied.

Such was the history of the young man seated in the smoking-room, poring over his Russia-leather pocket-book, of whom Dr. Pierman had formed an unfavorable opinion because of gossip concerning his friend. He

was grave and reticent, and might have said for years,

"My own thoughts
Are my companions; my designs and labors
And aspirations are my only friends."

That night Blanche's iceberg came; not in the ruby glow of sunset, a castle with pinnacle and airy fretwork of crystal, blue waves below, and clear sky above catching the rosy fire, but like the Angel of Death, Azrael, a white form hovering in the air, appearing through the evening mists in the path of the *Acis* like a doom. What awful mysteries lay hidden in the sullen, lapping waters that bore the shape so near, pale lights gleaming on the polished slopes here and there, like phosphorescent rays, as if the ship with tremulous flame sought to pierce the gloom of danger and learn the worst. The whisper had gone around, arousing the sleepers to witness the grand spectacle which might prove their last, when the captain would fain have still kept them dreaming below.

Mrs. Pierman stood near the cabin-door, shivering with sudden dread; Blanche, awed to stillness, clutched her father's hand on one side, and Miss Nancy's arm on the other. The girl knew that Howard Denby was behind her, although he did not speak. Miss Nancy shared that awed silence. The emergency was too sudden and unexpected to prepare for action. Was the thread of life actually reeled off to the end for them all?

"Lord, save my soul!" was the prayer of this lonely woman.

The girl beside her hid her face against her father's arm with the supplication, "Dear God, I am afraid to die!"

In the soul of Mrs. Pierman arose the cry, "Not yet, oh, not yet!" She moved forward a pace or two resolutely, almost defiantly.

"Come back, mamma," said Blanche, quickly, and joined her.

We can no longer recognize ourselves in the transformation of great emergencies. Before he was aware of an intention, Dr. Pierman had laid his hand heavily on Miss Nancy's shoulder.

"Is Humphrey Baylis also dead?"

"No." Her wonder was mechanical, almost far away in abstraction.

"Then why did you not marry him?" imperatively.

"I never dreamed of marrying him," quietly, yet with sudden awakening.

"If this is death, I should like to know the truth," he said, hoarsely.

The angel Azrael, terrible in majesty, floating across the track of all ships at times, towered, poised above, overshadowed the *Acis* with a presence still, benumbing, sublime, those sullen waters lapping and surging below, like the floods of oblivion awaiting the spectators. The space of a minute, clogged in flight by an agony of suspense; the limit of a heart-throb, chilled in its rapid pulsation; the suspension of respiration between hope and fear, and Azrael gathered form in the cold darkness, disputing the onward path of six hundred souls. Would the angel stoop and freeze their breath? Oh, to call back the days that are not! Oh, the noble impulses, the wise resolutions for the future, made by all hearts in the swerving of the *Acis!* Only to escape this time! If every one might be a Runjeet Singh shrinking from that ordeal, there was no King Solomon to raise his hand on high, wearing the signet-ring of chrysoprase blazing with mysterious fire, and summon the rushing wind from the west to lift the guest, and bear him, a cloud of purple and shining silk, away from the presence of Azrael.

The sullen waters moaning and lapping below, the darkness enveloping all, the ice-crag towering above them, all in the space of a heart-throb; then the *Acis* had changed her course, was edging off stealthily, rapidly. A fragment of ice struck the ship's side like a bolt, and the crystal splinters were scattered about Mrs. Pierman. The terrified woman uttered a faint cry, and sunk on her knees.

"The danger is over, Margaret. It was only a brush," said her husband, raising her.

"I am so deadly cold!" she groaned, and suffered him to lead her away.

Through the darkness Howard Denby said to Blanche, "Your fancy castle has vanished, after all."

The girl moved closer to him, with an unconscious confidence; a faint perfume reached him from her hair. "It is only waiting out yonder," she whispered.

Gone, like a dream of terror, like the wraith of storms, like a beckoning, ghostly messenger, was the iceberg, leaving night and silence on the ocean.

CHAPTER V.

AN IRON BOX.

NEXT day the sun broke over a clear expanse of water; the ice-rafts had been left behind like the distant cliffs lining the frozen sea; and danger past could be discussed with recovered cheerfulness, and even carelessness, in the radiance of morning.

After that the *Acis* slid gently southward, ever southward, until the warmth of fiery noons and balmy twilights permeated every thing. Miss Nancy did not recover equilibrium from the shock as rapidly as did some of her companions. She was reminded of the fairy tales where all the guests of the castle step down from their pedestals in the bewitchment of midnight, utter startling truths, assume unusual situations, then fall back into the reserve of their petrified

condition at dawn. Had John Pierman really breathed that question in her ear? Had Margaret, his wife, fallen on her knees, a mortal cowering in the presence of death? Certainly one would not imagine that such could have been the case from the aspect of either husband or wife next morning. Possibly Mrs. Pierman was ashamed of the weakness she had displayed, for her manner was again calm and collected. Perhaps Dr. Pierman repented of his impetuous curiosity under cover of night, as unbecoming in a sedate, middle-aged man; he followed the movements of Tommy and the Big Boy, who were both again rampant, with a thoughtful, preoccupied glance.

"My dear, Blanche Pierman is a lovely girl. I wish you would endeavor to interest her a little," said Mrs. Cocks to her son, with a certain maternal wistfulness of manner.

"Here goes," he replied, laughing carelessly, and went in search of the object.

He was a good-looking young man of medium height, inclined to be stout, with a full, somewhat heavy face, smoothly shaven, and small eyes already set about with little puckers and wrinkles of fat. The sole ambition he had as yet developed was to excel his world in extravagant and eccentric dress, chiefly of foreign importation, and in the inexhaustible variety of his walking-sticks. Rockwell Cocks despised jewelry, and rigidly banished the glitter of gold from his person beyond a massive chronometer and chain, but he may be supposed to have felt a kindred glow with King George the Fourth over the success of a new wig, when he appeared on the Avenue attired in dismal plaid from head to foot, three months in advance of his countrymen. Good-humor, interspersed with much irreverence, seldom deserted him.

When the iceberg had poised above them last night, he had lighted a cigar, and quoted a national wit: "Death stared us in the face, and we stared Death in the face." From which airy vein of composure it need not be inferred that he would have lacked bravery, had the real emergency come. He was placed in the world to be amused, and he intended to extort the last farthing due him from pleasure.

"We shall scarcely have a more narrow shave than that," he had said when the *Acis* altered her course, and flicked the ashes from his cigar. "How jolly, to drink a cobbler cooled by the ice scattered on deck!"

Howard Denby interested him as the young man did Mrs. Cocks. Rockwell ranked him as a melancholy youth, rather down on his luck, sure to cherish some Utopian project in the brain, and proud as Lucifer. "He might be a major-general in time but for my pranks. I must help him over here if I can," he resolved.

Not a contemptible young man by any means; liberal with his purse; a trifle fond of noisy gayety, who accepted the adoration of his mother graciously, and made light of a good deed if he ever performed one. He went in search of Blanche Pierman at his mother's bidding, already knowing fifty girls quite as pretty and agreeable, and some half a dozen whom he had at various times and seasons vaguely determined to marry. To be a lady's man was inexpressibly irksome to the convivial Rockwell, and he had already shattered his mother's hopes of a comfortable settlement in life many times.

She watched him cross the deck to the side of Blanche and Miss Nancy, well pleased with his sudden docility. More than one destiny on board the ship did Rockwell Cocks also cross on that occasion. Mrs. Cocks then drew her chair to Mrs. Pierman's side with a smile.

"I have sent my boy to make himself agreeable to your charming daughter," she said, confidentially. "Young people should like each other, if possible."

Mrs. Pierman listened with a thrill of delight. What if Blanche should marry Rockwell Cocks; one of the greatest matches in the country? She could scarcely credit that Mrs. Cocks would so readily smooth the way to such a consummation. Then the two mothers conversed about their children with the most transparent self-complacency in their respective merits, only thinly veiled by a modest deprecation. Afterward they glided off into a discussion of Paris *modistes*, with all the attendant little rills of converse concerning custom-house duties, Irish linen, and Brussels point, which flow into that great stream of ship conversation —the fashions. Mrs. Cocks gave Mrs. Pierman the card of her dress-maker on the Rue St. Honoré, and in return Mrs. Pierman strongly recommended her own milliner on the Rue du Quatre Septembre; and the acquaintance progressed famously. Mrs. Cocks was summing up the matter thus:

"These Piermans are said to be living at a rapid rate for their means. The girl will have next to nothing besides her *trousseau;* but, then, she is sweet and fresh: I could train her to any thing. I should like Rockwell respectably married. How do I know that one of those horrid ballet-girls may not inveigle him into a clandestine marriage sometime when he has taken too much wine?"

Balm to wounded vanity: if the Young Lady swept away Howard Denby in her train, Rockwell Cocks, a celebrity in his circle, had enrolled himself under Blanche's gay silken banner. The girl received him with a smile and arch glance from beneath curling lashes. Rockwell was bluff and jovial, much addicted to chaff, and prepared

to inspect in Blanche a new specimen with a certain curiosity implanted by his mother's words. Miss Nancy was vexed by the defection of Howard Denby, and the supremacy of the fop, as she chose to consider Mr. Cocks. She had come to view the affairs of Blanche with a zealous partisanship, and she liked Howard Denby, as indeed did all ladies, save Mrs. Pierman, who regarded him with supercilious, drooping eyelids. Moreover, Miss Nancy had discovered the secret of that first mirthful glance he had given her when introduced to Blanche, and the revelation had made friends of the two.

Blanche had praised a handsome young man, German or poetic in aspect, not only to her room-mate in cabin 15, but to the individual himself in a cabin not ten paces distant, and divided by a thin wall. With such delicacy as the occasion warranted, he ventured to hint at this dangerous vicinity, and by intuition she divined quickly the truth.

"You overhear our gossip," she exclaimed. "Well, I am only a crabbed old woman; but I defy you to find a sweeter child, even in her prattle with me, than Blanche."

"That I can believe. Pray never tell her. Perhaps I have done wrong to speak of the matter at all," said Howard, gently.

"You are quite right, and I thank you," replied Miss Nancy, heartily; and formed a resolution to curb her own tongue as well as that active member belonging to the young girl, her companion.

The confidence led to a certain acquaintance which strengthened in interest daily. Miss Nancy fell to studying Howard Denby with her head on one side, searched him with adroit questions, and learned more than he was aware of for her pains. Her meditations concerning him found utterance to Blanche sometimes, who often listened quietly, and as often spurned the subject, to Miss Nancy's perplexity, with a laugh.

Unaccountably vexed by reason of her intense partisanship when Rockwell Cocks approached, and Blanche glanced up at him demurely through her silken lashes, Miss Nancy stalked away to the upper deck alone. Few people on board the *Acis* studied human nature with the keen zest, the lively interest, of our school-marm. The field was fresh to her, and the variety inexhaustible. Often from the deck above did she watch the steerage passengers herded together in a narrow space by that dividing rope, pallid, sickly, depressed; the wanderers returning home disappointed; the invalid coming back to die; the occasional prosperous Hibernian, prepared to flaunt his money before his kinsfolk in the Old Country. Children eat languidly from tin basins in corners, or watched the sports of Tommy Pierman, much as one little dog eyes another.

A group of girls behind a cask, knitting and watching the sea, smiled faintly at the pleasantries of an old sailor mopping the deck. A woman groped her way out of the door below, and leaned against the bulwark. She was beyond middle age, attired in a brown-stuff gown, a cloth cloak, and a black silk bonnet of antique shape, such as was once worn for protection of the head. Her features were firm and large, and her eyes were covered by a pair of blue-tinted glasses. She held in her hand a slip of paper folded, and, to Miss Nancy's surprise, she looked up at her earnestly, and beckoned. Was the stranger summoning her? Miss Nancy shook her head doubtfully, and prepared to move away.

Again the woman made that earnest gesture, pointing to herself, and the slip of paper she held. Thus entreated, Miss Nancy descended the steps and approached the rope.

"You know me?" she questioned, still surprised.

The stranger laid her hand on Miss Nancy's arm across the rope; the daylight fell strongly on her face, which was sallow and worn; her eyes were invisible through the darkened spectacles; her thin, nervous lips twitched as if from suppressed emotion.

"No," she replied, quietly; "I like your appearance. You are trustworthy. Will you do me the favor to give him this slip of paper?"

Miss Nancy received the slip in perplexity.

"Wait," said the singular person.

The figure of the old millionaire became visible on the upper deck, pacing the boards restlessly, although Blanche's rose-bud had faded from his button-hole long ago.

"Take it to him," whispered the stranger, her fingers again closing impressively over Miss Nancy's arm. "Tell him it is from a passenger in the steerage, and do not speak of it to your friends afterward. That is all."

Between wonder and docile obedience, for there was an imperative ring in the old woman's voice which seemed to reverse their respective positions, Miss Nancy found herself again on the upper deck, and confronted the millionaire as he wheeled around in his walk.

"A woman in the steerage requested me to give you this paper, sir."

For a moment he measured her with his glance, sharply, suspiciously, then accepted the paper and unfolded it.

"You are kind to interest yourself in the steerage—and in me," he said, with a little mocking bow, and resumed his walk as if no interruption had occurred.

"The service was a trifling one," said Miss Nancy, unflinchingly, and stepped aside.

Presently he returned to her.

"The woman in the steerage is a fanatic, and fanaticism is worse than insanity.

Doubtless she has taken you into her confidence," with a wary inflection of voice.

"She has not taken me into her confidence; and I suppose she knows her own business," retorted Miss Nancy, nettled by the very suggestion.

"Most women do," he sneered, with that cold smile of his, like a frosty gleam on deserted windows.

Ah, Miss Nancy, if all women did! If you had known your own business, standing there facing the insignificant man in gray. Here was indeed a field for speculation. No romance could be fabricated from such materials as the plain woman in blue goggles, and the gray millionaire, whose surprise was pettish and irritable, rather than the bearing of conscious guilt for some crime. Moving to the ship's side, Miss Nancy discovered that the strange woman had disappeared, and she was about to withdraw from the vicinity of the old man, whom she instinctively disliked, when Dr. Pierman joined her.

He had not addressed her previously on that day, and so far had he set aside the remembrance of their youth that the enthusiasm of a recent conversation was still upon him. For an hour he had been discussing professional medical questions with a Hebrew physician from Lisbon, whose erudition delighted him.

A confidence trembled on Nancy's lips; it would be so natural to tell John about the millionaire first mentioned by him and the woman in the steerage, who evidently was not a servant. The abstraction in his face withheld her. She hesitated, and the opportunity was lost.

"There is a brain used to delving in the richest mines of thought. He is a linguist, a mathematician, a botanist, a geologist," he said, referring to the Hebrew physician, and assured of her interest. Every one, young and old, seemed to take it for granted that Miss Nancy was exclusively interested in their respective affairs. "Yet we all start from the same point, it seems. Now, what do you suppose was his first specimen?"

"First specimen," she repeated, vaguely, her thoughts drifting again to the steerage passenger.

"The first successful attempt at a perfect skeleton, let us say," continued Dr. Pierman, with animation.

"I can not possibly guess," she replied.

"A mouse, Nancy, such as I once prepared with infinite pains and skill, each tiny ivory bone perfect, and I was happy when I saw the shape laid tastefully on a velvet cushion which revealed the bleached delicacy of a perfect mechanism in relief."

Miss Nancy laughed.

"I have the mouse skeleton still under its little glass dome," she answered. "You gave it to me as a birthday gift, and father was very proud of it."

"It was like you both to remember," said Dr. Pierman, with a suspicion of moisture in his eyes. "God knows what my boyhood would have been without the father, Nancy," he added, half appealingly.

Nancy's lip trembled a little; but she was not even thinking of him just then; she saw only the white grave-stone on the hill-side, to which the children had brought wild flowers.

"He did his duty by all," she said at length, with a certain austere solemnity, which set John Pierman aside out of the father's path and her own.

"I know it, and those were fortunate who came within his influence," he said, mildly. Such humility disarmed her.

"He hoped great and noble things of you, John Pierman, because in his soul's purity he could see beyond. I hope you have realized them," she said, quickly, and left him.

The *Acis* slid southward, ever southward, after that warning of icebergs on the deep. The fervent glow of day waned to the soft twilight, merged gently, imperceptibly, into night, luminous with large stars and fanned by warm breezes. The foam-snow in the vessel's wake took strange sparkles of phosphorescence as it swirled in eddies about black mysterious waves.

Rockwell Cocks was following his mother's advice with a vengeance. Argus-eyed Gossip declared that he had fallen in love with Blanche Pierman at first sight, and he was not disposed to dispute the assertion. Only the Young Lady shrugged her shoulders.

"One of his flirtations," she said.

The rose-bloom was deepening in Blanche's cheek, and a softened brilliancy glowed in her dark eyes; Mrs. Pierman's child was not likely to remain unmoved by the triumph of such a conquest. Already maternal injunctions rang in her ear and confused her brain.

"If you manage him well, such a marriage will give you the first place in society. Yes, indeed, your own country has nothing more to offer you, and people who have snubbed us will be only too anxious to gain a place on *your* visiting-list. You shall select the *trousseau* personally in Paris."

Rapid is the mental feminine calculation on matrimony at all times, but doubly rapid is it in the leisure of a sea-voyage.

The Young Lady still chaffed every one, sung Italian arias in the gloaming, and dragged Howard Denby about, when he had not retired into the depths of that pocket-book which interested him so profoundly. The Young Lady, having attached the handsomest man on board to her train, was satisfied. Gossip also had a word to say concerning this pair.

"I have no patience with a young man who could associate with Blanche Pierman,

and prefers that painted creature," thought Miss Nancy, and was waspish in her greeting to the offending youth.

A man may hold his own, especially after having overheard himself praised by a girl in the next cabin. Miss Nancy frowned on the Young Lady in every phase of aspect—on her loud, ringing laughter, her extravagant dress, her levity and assurance — and quite longed to thrust some little needle of sarcasm as to his choice into the armor of Howard Denby. He had stepped aside for Rockwell Cocks without a word or gesture betraying disappointment. Perhaps he was not used to such girls as her favorite, and therefore did not appreciate her loveliness.

Thus reasoning angrily, Miss Nancy pounced on Mr. Denby in the twilight, and, restraining a desire to shake him, began to pace the deck with him instead.

How artfully did she turn her conversation on the ship's company, leading the way not only in her talk, but in her walk, toward Blanche seated alone on the upper deck! We praise or blame from the greatest variety of motives, sometimes casting a stone, by means of comparison, at that which we should extol for the same reason on another occasion. The frigidity of Miss Nancy's disapproval of the Young Lady, conveyed inferentially in this promenade, might well have struck terror to the stoutest heart. Howard Denby assented quietly to her praise of Blanche, but with no heat of partisanship; his very tameness irritated and piqued her.

Unconsciously she had drifted into the conviction that these two young people were to be lovers, and each hour circumstances only sundered them more widely. A fig for Rockwell Cocks! Verily Miss Nancy had come from Eutopia, and been fed on milk and honey, not to see affairs in a more correct light of reason.

"He will propose to-night," thought Mrs. Pierman, with satisfaction, watching Rockwell Cocks make his way to the upper deck, where he had recently left Blanche.

Fate, in the shape of Miss Nancy, interfered.

"Would you oblige me by searching for my camp-chair, Mr. Cocks? It is green, with a red border, and I have missed it for hours."

"With pleasure." Rockwell raised his hat, and disappeared below.

Miss Nancy smiled and flushed in the darkness. What had she done? Howard Denby was seated beside Blanche, she having withdrawn on plea of other engagements. Lo! Rockwell Cocks, advancing to destroy every thing, was met and foiled by that suggestion of the camp-stool. Again Miss Nancy laughed softly in the darkness, delighted with her own cleverness, and ignorant how soon she would reap the whirlwind for her audacity.

"Back so soon? What have you done with my child?" inquired Mrs. Pierman, sweetly.

Rockwell Cocks was poking hopelessly in a pyramid of stools and chairs.

"Miss Hawse wishes a seat up aloft. By Jove! it's a regular needle-in-a-haystack business to make out red from blue in this pile," responded the young gentleman.

Mrs. Pierman compressed her lips.

"Do not trouble yourself to search farther, Mr. Cocks; and oblige me by telling Miss Hawse that I wish to see her directly."

Rockwell Cocks, a young man at all times of pleasing independence of action, strolled back without the chair, and, instead of delivering Mrs. Pierman's message, decided to have a brush with the school-marm. It is to be feared that he was prompted by a mischievous desire to thwart Mrs. Pierman, who beamed on him as so many mothers had done before, and at the same time to enliven, perhaps horrify, Miss Nancy by frightful tales of his own adventures and misdemeanors. She fell a willing victim to his wiles, so that she kept him aloof from that corner where Blanche sat, and Rockwell never objected to variety.

In his quick, rattling fashion, he gave her the interesting particulars of his dismissal from West Point, and the part Howard Denby had played; and as such a respectable, middle-aged woman is the most delightful listener attainable in the world to a youth just fledged, the pictures of his various escapades were colored with an unsparing hand. Miss Nancy knew that he was telling awful fibs, was making fun of her, and yet she could not help liking him, scamp that he was.

Over near the bulwark, Blanche, shrouded in soft fleecy wraps, her glance pensive, the outline of her face spiritualized by the night, was watching dreamily the white foam swallowed up by the black waters astern. Howard Denby looked at her intently, almost eagerly, as if he were receiving an image in his brain, always to be retained, this twilight, half-shadowy girl, which might be treasured in the heat and noise of the noonday hereafter.

"What do you like best in the world?" he demanded, suddenly.

"A choice of employment or amusement?" she questioned, languidly.

"Yes; if employment is ever amusing."

Blanche's eyes and teeth flashed in the gloaming.

"I like to dance the 'Boston,' guided by Strauss the divine."

"Is it possible!" The exclamation was involuntary; he knew so little of her world.

"Why not?" said Blanche, half defiantly. "One must dance when young. Now, I can guess very readily your favorite pursuit, Mr. Denby. I am sure that you are a poet."

Denby laughed.

"I never wrote a line of poetry in my life." Then he added, softly, "If I were so gifted, I would choose such a moment of inspiration as this."

The girl was quiet. Above them the clear sky arched, to meet the whispering waters; the white foam melted in the ship's wake: the laughter of Rockwell Cocks behind the smoke-stack occasionally broke the stillness. Blanche knew, with a strange sense of awakening, that Howard Denby's gray eyes were again fixed on her face.

> "How can I tell the signals and the signs
> By which one heart another heart divines?
> How can I tell the many thousand ways
> By which it keeps the secret it betrays?"

When the delinquents came below, Mrs. Pierman confronted Miss Nancy with suppressed anger in her face, quite unmindful that her husband and daughter were spectators of the scene.

"May I request you, Miss Hawse, since you seem to be included in our family party, and therefore we are identified with each other, never to repeat what you have done to-night?"

Every word conveyed a sting in the utterance.

"My dear Margaret," expostulated Dr. Pierman, with that manner of soothing a fractious child which he so often adopted when addressing his wife.

"I do not understand you," said Miss Nancy, reddening under Mrs. Pierman's words and glance.

"You sent Rockwell Cocks, a young man unused to picking up his own glove, to search for your camp-chair as if he had been a lackey. Ignorance of social etiquette could alone excuse such presumption."

Mrs. Pierman's voice quivered with rage, but Miss Nancy's unpardonable assurance was not her only misdemeanor. Had she not stupidly interfered between the lovers, and detained Rockwell by her side the whole evening? An old maid talking with a young man! Mrs. Pierman had fully made up her mind, with a nervous eagerness, that he should propose that night.

"Nonsense, mamma!" interposed Blanche, hurriedly, linking her arm within Miss Nancy's. "He was most happy to be of service, I am sure; and what is a young man about for, except to be useful?"

Miss Nancy grew taller by inches. She was about to speak, when a glance at Dr. Pierman and Blanche checked her. She turned, and entered her cabin without uttering a word.

"Do not mind mamma," pleaded Blanche, following her. "Her nerves make her irritable sometimes; she means nothing, indeed."

"I can not understand the necessity of making such scenes," said Dr. Pierman, impatiently. "Your conduct is simply inexcusable, Margaret."

"I do not care!" she retorted, tremulously. "The next event will be a gushing description of our childhood at Briarbush from Nancy. Perhaps you will agree with me there is no necessity for Rockwell Cocks's knowing all that."

Afterward the warm days chilled again; rain fell monotonously, changing to raw mist and fog as they neared the coast. Rockwell Cocks did not propose, and the saloon was a thoroughfare for pent-up humanity.

One night a shudder went through the *Acis*, like a quivering throb, from stem to stern, followed by an awful crash, and a cry that rang out on the startled air with none to hear. All was confusion and panic of fear. Blanching faces and trembling limbs, aroused from slumber, at first refused their office. Flying groups of women, clasping their children, gathered to a mighty surge amidst shrieks, groans, prayers, and supplications, and beat against the main stairway in the blind instinct of escape. Here a barrier awaited and drove them back: the head-steward, a thin, cool man, and the stewardess, a square-built, stolid woman, who stood with folded arms, opposing their progress. It was nothing—an accident to the machinery, soon remedied. The ladies were to remain below, the male passengers were required on deck. At the same time, the calm stewardess made no objection to a use of life-belts. Thus driven back, and partially re-assured, the women sobbed, prayed, and demanded wildly what had happened. The absence of the men was followed by a steady thump of pumps overhead.

What had happened?

Walls of fog rose before and behind the ill-fated steamship, veiling a coast that rends with sharp rocks, crushes between reefs and cliffs, or strands on treacherous sands, aided by the tempest or the opaque atmosphere. The *Acis* knew her ground from long familiarity. She had been feeling her way cautiously through the mist, listening for the muffled sound of fog-bells which never came, eagerly striving to discern the beacon-lights which were not visible. Security and quiet slumber wrapped the ship, all save anxious captain and anxious crew. No lights, no fog-bell—that ghostly, impenetrable wall closing around, ever nearer, in swathing folds, and time scarcely worn toward midnight.

With slowed engines, the *Acis* felt her way. The captain hove the lead, and suddenly heard broken water on the edge of sands. Too late! Never before had the brave man, breasting manifold perils, known the doom of that sound—the sullen roar of broken waters on the sand margin. He had grown gray and wrinkled listening for it; the nightmare of it had perched ever upon

his pillow, when he snatched hasty slumbers on nearing this coast. Now the worst was come! He had missed his reckoning. Too late, indeed!

With rending crash the reversed screw broke; that shudder ran through the whole craft, and the *Acis* drove straight on the land; not amidst the cruel-fanged rocks which pierce, the awful cliffs which spurn back these gifts of ocean, crushed in far-flying spray, but on the wide stretch of sands, the slowly devouring, implacable enemy that sucks down countless noble ships to oblivion.

There lay the *Acis*, helpless and stricken, lifted high on the strand by one mighty billow, swept of boats and gear by the wash of succeeding ones, her women kept below, her men at the pumps in the desperate chance of stemming that volume of increasing waters. Now a rocket streamed up, like a wavering ray of hope, and was lost; now pistols snapped like pop-guns. Soon these signals ceased; the powder was damaged by the trooping waves that came in battalions, gathered like enemies about the *Acis*, wounded to death.

Which to choose? The wooden tub used for centuries, which rode the sea like a cork and floated even a wreck; or that iron box, the *Acis*, modern invention of speed, driving through the waves by main force, striking the shore, and with rivets broken in the shock, weighted by cumbrous and now useless machinery, filling, sinking.

Down in the cabin Miss Nancy held Blanche Pierman by the hand. Dr. Pierman had fastened belts about all of them, and had confided the girl especially to her care. Tommy clung to his mother, whimpering, and Mrs. Pierman sat on the cabin floor in the very *abandon* of despair, her face buried in her handkerchief. After the first shock of alarm, Miss Nancy was well-nigh apathetic. She seemed to have passed wholly out of herself, or *to have lived through a similar scene before.*

"We are already on land," she said, aloud, drawing Blanche closer. "The people will soon come to our assistance."

The stewardess nodded to her approvingly.

A nun knelt beside the cabin table, praying over her rosary. She might have been a figure carved in black marble. A little child, with curling golden hair, nestled its head on its mother's arm and fell asleep again. The old millionaire came forth from his cabin, already muffled in the gray coat. He stopped before Miss Nancy, his hands trembling, and with a dazed expression on his pinched face.

"Have you seen her?" he muttered, and into his eyes came the look of one already before the judgment-seat of God.

"No," said Miss Nancy, still marveling at her own composure. "You are late in seeking her; find her if you can."

"Yes, yes, I am late," he said, dreamily, and groped on to the door in order to be first when the time came.

Oh, leaden moments of waiting in dumb suspense! Oh, ceaseless prayers rising from all hearts for deliverance and the tardy day!

The time came with the turning of the tide. The *Acis* ceased to thump on the ridge, the pumps to play. Again that curdling, desolating cry rang through the ship, startling paralyzed women to their feet, and rousing children from their slumbers. A column of water poured through the skylight, down where knelt the nun in marble stillness. Miss Nancy felt the chill of the inpouring flood, first about her ankles, then creeping up to her knees. There was a dull plash and surge as the intruding waves sought each open cabin, and lapped about the berths for prey. A shriek and gurgle told too often where the gliding, treacherous enemy caught the inmates unawares.

A shudder ran through Nancy, the love of life stirred and leaped within her veins. Were they all to drown, pent up like rats in a cage? The stewardess was driving the helpless crowd to the stair-way, even as she had previously held them back. They were to run the gantlet of that wave-swept deck, and gain the rigging as their only hope.

Many held back, cowering, and chose death below, deaf and blind to words of encouragement. Mrs. Pierman refused to stir. Nancy caught her up in her arms, nerved by the strength of despair, and delivered her to her husband on the stairs, who already clasped Tommy.

"Come back for Blanche next," cried Nancy, and held the girl ready, her own breath almost spent.

Two white, resolute faces peered down at them, the faces of Howard Denby and Rockwell Cocks.

"Where is my mother? Oh, mother! mother!" cried the latter, wildly.

"She is down there," said Miss Nancy, and made way for him to pass.

"You, too," panted Howard Denby. "Come quickly."

"Take her first," said Nancy. "You can not manage more than one."

Howard disappeared with the nearly insensible Blanche. Miss Nancy, clinging to the wall, felt the waters rising, ever rising, and waited alone. Soon that deluge would gain on her peak of elevation, and then—every one else had some friends or family to regard. She was terribly alone. In a flash of recognition her thoughts went out to the solitary woman in the steerage. Had she been trampled upon or saved? A floating object struck against her foot. Yes, the waters were rising, would soon reach her. In the cabins was stillness at last, and only

the sapping swish of the flood from wall to wall. She put out her hand for the object in the darkness: it was a small book. Without heeding her own action, she thrust it into her dress.

Again the voice of Howard Denby, hoarse and thickened by fatigue, was heard. He appeared, clinging to the door.

"We must watch our chance," he shouted.

A clean-swept deck sheeted in foam, the fog-pall enveloping all, darkness of destroying land on one hand, darkness of ingulfing sea on the other, and a few mortals clinging to the rigging. Without one glance around the two sped over the perilous way—the bridge of glass, the cimeter-edge between life and death. The gathering flood might swoop over them at any instant, and hurl them, like feathers before the whirlwind, far out into the deep. Somebody grasped Nancy, and raised her.

"Nancy, are you safe?" questioned Dr. Pierman.

"Don't let him go again," cried Blanche, above. "He will be lost this time, and he has saved so many lives. Don't let him go back."

Thus the still more fearful term of waiting began; waiting for the day to come, for breath to fail, for cramped limbs to stiffen, and benumbed fingers to relax their hold on the ropes, and bodies sink below. The *Acis* swayed to every impulse of the tide; she was settling fast, digging for herself a grave in the sands.

The spray flew up ice-cold, and drenched the survivors; the depths howled aloud for their lives beneath, marked by failing faculties; the hours dragged on.

A woman clasped Miss Nancy's knees on the rope-ladder, a woman whose face she could not see, but whose head she patted reassuringly when she dared to free her fingers for the purpose. She prayed those above her and about her to tie her to the support, if possible, in order that she might not lose this other life as well, if her hold failed; but they did not hear, or were too much encumbered to venture on the undertaking. This weight on her limbs seemed at times insupportable; she feared losing her senses, and falling headlong with the burden that dragged her down. Ah, merciful God, grant the light of day, and relief from the agony, or the release of death! If she closed her eyes, lights danced and flickered before them. Only the strain of resisting the woman who clung to her, and thereby supporting her, kept her acutely alive to the present need.

Then the woman began to sing hymns, in a voice of singular purity and power, that rose above the surging flood, and reached many a failing ear.

"Lord, grant me strength!" she prayed once, and Miss Nancy heard her:

"'Rock of Ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.'"

Thus the clear voice rose on the terrible silence of deck and cabin, the chilled silence of the watchers above.

"'Rock of Ages,'" repeated Miss Nancy's pale lips, and she saw again the white meeting-house on the hill, father giving the hymn from the desk, and the voices of the choir floating out through the open windows to meet the summer sunshine. He was very near just then; she could feel his presence. His face grew luminous, distinct, transfigured by a heavenly radiance against earth's dim background.

Her hold on the rope was slipping, quietly, inevitably; the weight on her feet grew heavier; the hymns had ceased, drowned in the myriad mingling voices of the breakers. She closed her eyes, resigned at last to cease the struggle termed existence. There was a stir all about her which she scarcely heeded, a feeble, uncertain shout. Once she opened her eyes widely.

A pallid gleam had stolen over the scene like the illumination of a blue torch. On the ladder beyond her were Dr. Pierman, holding his wife and son; Blanche, with her arms locked around the neck of Howard Denby, who stooped even as Miss Nancy gazed, and laid his cheek caressingly against the white, wan face pillowed on his breast. The woman, still clasping her knees, and who had sung hymns, was no other than the stranger in the steerage. Miss Nancy opened her lips to speak, but no sound came.

The woman was gazing down intently at some object left by the now ebbing tide, and did not observe Nancy's recognition. This object, previously caught behind the bulwark, slowly drifted past them: it was the body of a drowned man. With pinched, white face upturned, the Vandyck beard plainly visible, wrapped in the familiar gray coat to the last, the millionaire passed them, claimed by the sea.

The blue gleam was dawn. The day had come at last, but not for Miss Nancy. The roar of the breakers was in her ears; light could not quench the darkness which gathered, nearer and crept upward, like that dread of encroaching waters in the horror of the earlier hours. All, all was lost!

CHAPTER VI.

SOMEBODY'S POCKET-BOOK.

A WOMAN sat alone in an upper chamber of a London hotel overlooking a crowded thoroughfare. The room was small and dismal; the defacing touch of London smoke, which has been so often described, and yet must be experienced for a due appreciation, had begrimed the sombre carpet, the

white dimity bed-curtains, and rested on the walls. Occasionally, a little spiral flake of soot floated down gently on the nose of the solitary occupant of the room, whose gaze sought the opposite roofs, the strip of sky visible, and such glimpses of the thoroughfare below as might be obtained from two very high windows.

The person was no other than Miss Nancy, alone in the heart of a great city.

Three weeks before the *Acis* had gone down. Miss Nancy had been rescued in a perishing condition, by the boat coming to the relief when she lost consciousness. After that there was a blank of illness in a little village on the coast, when she did not recognize even the faces of the Piermans constantly bending over her. Perhaps her first reviving sense was the conviction of Mrs. Pierman's being out of temper over the wearisome delay. Yet Mrs. Pierman had been kind, had set every other consideration aside except Nancy's recovery when they landed, forlorn and shipwrecked mariners; but rest and refreshment brought fresh courage. The *Acis* had disappeared even as the iceberg vanished which had crossed their path. It was best to forget dangers, and turn back to life again, grateful for escape. Nancy was getting better, with Dr. Pierman for physician and Blanche for nurse.

The Cockses had gone on to London. Howard Denby had also departed, with a somewhat stiff leave-taking and averted looks from Blanche. Mrs. Pierman fretted at losing ground with her new acquaintances by a prolonged absence. She persuaded herself that it was all for the sake of her child. Why could not Nancy be left with the kind people who had sheltered her, and Dr. Pierman return to visit her if necessary?

Daily her murmurs grew louder: Blanche cared more already for this stranger than for her own mother. It was natural; her father taught her to respect Miss Nancy before all others. What people would think of it, she, Mrs. Pierman, was wholly unprepared to determine.

Fragments of these murmurs struck sharply on Miss Nancy's ear, and produced rapid convalescence. Still pale and weak, she insisted on traveling to London; strength would return to her with exertion, she said. Once arrived there, she parted resolutely with her friends. They were going to the Langham Hotel, showy Mecca of all pilgrims across seas, apparently; her purse necessitated her seeking more moderate quarters. In vain Dr. Pierman and Blanche protested. Mrs. Pierman was silent, or faintly negative: of course, every one was best judge of his own means.

Thus Nancy took a cab, and, in due course, having been tossed like a shuttlecock from one family hotel to another by the astounding "season" prices demanded, meekly sought refuge in the upper chamber where she now sat. She was glad of a shelter, and the hotel, small though it was, kept a vigilant eye on her expenses. Behold, was she not an American, and is it not written in the book of European hotel-keepers that Americans are all rich, and to be plucked accordingly? The wreck of the *Acis* was already a thing of the past. A colliery explosion, a rumor of war, an extraordinary murder, had each in turn succeeded it, and the casualty would find a place hereafter in a list of marine disasters. The survivors had been scattered like chaff before the wind. Miss Nancy had neither heard nor seen more of the woman who clung to her knees that dreadful night.

She sat gazing out over the opposite roofs, and a second flake of soot settled upon her nose without disturbing her meditations. How she had always longed to see this great London! How often had the father traced its history in her childish days, with the aid of tattered prints. Suddenly she started up, and opened her trunk.

"I have never thought of it since!" she exclaimed, aloud. "The illness put every thing out of my brain, I suppose."

She took from the trunk a dressing-gown, crumpled and discolored, and held it up at arms-length for inspection.

"Poor rag! shall I always keep you to remind me how nearly you were my shroud?" she murmured, and searched a pocket in the lining. "Strange I should have grasped any thing that night, but it seemed to come to me like a gift. Ah, here it is!" She drew forth a small pocket-book.

Blanche Pierman had left the dressing-gown undisturbed, especially as it furnished Miss Nancy's sole claim to a wardrobe when they left the ship. She went to the window to examine it in the waning twilight. A Russia-leather book bound in silver, and with a plate on one side containing initials in monogram.

"H. D." read Miss Nancy, and, with curiosity aroused, she lighted a tallow-candle that sputtered in a tall, plated candlestick, and made a feeble star of flame in the increasing darkness.

To open and search the book was to discover the owner, and restore it if possible. The first leaf was a blank without writing; clearly a nicely kept book, nearly new, and not much damaged by water. There were two silk pockets; in one an ivory pencil-case, several visiting-cards waiting to be filled out, with strips of tissue-paper still adhering, and a pink-tinted calendar containing the advertisement of a glove-maker on the back; in the other, an antique coin with the head of Minerva stamped on it. The pockets revealed nothing. Turning the leaves slowly, she came upon certain entries

made in pencil, in a small, rather crabbed hand, the jottings of an owner who understood suggestions which he did not care to make public to others, if by chance he mislaid his book. The top of a page would begin:

"Write to K., of Chicago, about the P. W. Safe for the present, but possibly shaky next year."

The bottom of the page might conclude with these equally lucid hints: "Try the M. in England, and get a bid for L. if chance offers. Investigate the legal rights of M. M. O. without lawyers over here knowing the drift; 79 must be looked up at all hazards before P. begins the war in stocks."

The fifth leaf was covered with figures arranged numerically with neat exactitude. The sixth— What was this? Miss Nancy stared, rubbed her eyes, and held the book closer to the candle:

"*Mr. Simon Warren, Lilborough, Vermont.*" Below this line was written, "Reply to his questions concerning his shares at early date."

Miss Nancy laid down the book on her knee, and looked about her like one in a dream. "Mr. Simon Warren, Lilborough!" Why, the person referred to thus was Uncle Simon, dead these four months, and who had left no accumulation of money to Nancy, his heiress. Shares—in what?

Snatching up the book again, she searched the remaining pages with feverish energy; she emptied the whole contents on the table. The antique silver coin rolled forth, a shower of blank cards followed, the ivory pencil rattled after; other clue than the initials on the case there was absolutely none.

"H. D." read Miss Nancy again and again, striving to place the owner.

She was on the brink of some mystery concerning herself. "H. D." A new light broke upon her; she laughed at her own previous stupidity. More than once she had seen this identical pocket-book in the hands of Howard Denby. The gift brought her by the waters belonged to the young man who had struggled back across the wave-swept deck to rescue her. Only, what possible connection existed between dead Uncle Simon and Howard Denby? Oh that she had known sooner when brought in daily association with him on shipboard! Oh that she could have peeped before at the secrets of the Russia-leather book which so vitally concerned herself! To-morrow she would seek him, restore the book, and learn about Uncle Simon.

Miss Nancy retired to rest, but not to sleep. Her pulses throbbed with excitement; her brain was in a whirl; the noise of a great city reached her like those never-to-be-forgotten breakers on the shore: the two windows showed a gray blank of sky. Every painful event, every mortification experienced in her life seemed to rise, and give her a little stab of reminder. Her cheek glowed with honest anger when she reviewed the cool disdain of Mrs. Pierman; the anxiety, scarcely veiled by politeness, to be rid of her companionship. Miss Nancy would not stoop to measure weapons with her former friend; but there was gall in the suggestion that she was a discredit to a traveling party, and must therefore be thrust off to journey alone. She demanded nothing besides civility of Margaret Pierman, and even this was not accorded her. It was unbearable.

She had never been permitted to talk with amiable Mrs. Cocks without direct interference, or a suspicious, disapproving surveillance. Why should Margaret thus regard her?

Simple-minded Miss Nancy from Briarbush! We hate the sight of those we have willfully injured, and the insolent are never without wounds.

Finally she sunk into uneasy slumber, from which she was again aroused by a powerful influence. She raised herself, and listened intently. The new influence which had stolen upon her, and oppressed to a sense of acute wakefulness, was the silence following midnight and preceding dawn, when tumult of vehicles and hurrying feet ebb away, and there is a pause as of suspended breath before the strife begins again. Miss Nancy peered forth from the window awed by this wonderful change. Two o'clock, marked by the music of chimes from some unseen church-tower, and stillness, solemn, vague, and chilling, brooded over the city. Above, a dark pall of roofs, chimneys, and spires were faintly discernible; below, a deserted thoroughfare, and a female figure standing on the curbstone peering anxiously up a narrow lane, where the strains of an orchestra, the flaring lights of a gin-palace, had been apparent earlier.

The silent spectator asked herself, with a throb of pity, who she was. A creature stamped with the coinage of a great city's misery and debasement? No, an elderly woman, decently clad in black, who was evidently searching for some one—a son, a husband, a daughter. The policeman passed her without comment; a "swell," emerging from a dark door-way, whistled for a hansom-cab; the solitary woman in black was left alone.

Over yonder were London Bridge in deepest shadow—ghosts of suicides shrouded in the turbid waters—Seven Dials, and Petticoat Lane, with crime driven to its lairs by approaching day. May not St. Paul's and the Abbey be the soul aspirations of those striving to escape from the dreary level of the town and its baser nature, arrested in dome, arch, and pinnacle? Two faces rose before

Nancy—Charles Dickens, prophet of these dark homes of the poor, who led Little Dorrit through the midnight streets; and Charles Lamb, who belonged to the daylight, diverting weariness or distaste of home by rushing into the crowded Strand, and fed his humor and his sympathy on the multitudinous moving pictures, like the scenes of a shifting pantomime.

Again the unseen chimes made their musical reckoning of another hour; the woman in black fluttered away, and was lost; the watcher drew in her head with a prayer for the soul who was ignorant of her very existence, and again sought her pillow.

The Ladies' Coffee-room of Mulcher's Family Hotel was reached by descending dingy stairways, which had the appearance of winding down a well, so dark and narrow was the interior. On the first landing was a counter partitioning off a sooty corner, illuminated by jets of gas, where several Etnas apparently steamed night and day in a chronic state of tea-brewing, and two damsels, respectively blonde and brunette, presided. What the duties of these damsels might be Miss Nancy was unable to fully discover. The blonde wore a sky-blue bow in her yellow hair, of which she was conscious, and giggled very much while supplying various gentlemen with postage-stamps. The brunette, trim, natty, alert, with much jet ornamentation appended to her person, eyes as hard and of the same lustre as her ornaments, and a wheedling smile, answered inquiries, received orders, and darted about gracefully. The coffee-room was an oblong apartment, with opaque windows, and several works of art on the wall of surprising size, but where the original subjects were hopelessly lost in rich depths of a chocolate-hued background. There was a seemingly high-shouldered sideboard at one end, and a chimney-piece at the other, flanked by gaudy china shepherdesses guarding a grate, which was obscured by an avalanche of curled paper, as if the chimney had rained down mottoes all night.

A waiter presided over this cheerful apartment, of cynical aspect, with a bald head, a cold eye, and a stiff shirt-collar. As he made a place for Miss Nancy by the window, there was a chilling disapproval in his manner, which either evinced a discontented sense of superiority to his present walk in life, or a disposition to despise herself.

Three other persons were already seated in the room: a young man with the unmistakable radiance of satisfied bridegroom about him; a pretty girl, in rich toilet, with the equally unmistakable aspect of blushing bride; and an elderly matron who sniffed disdainfully at the repast furnished by Mulcher's Hotel. This lady immediately put on her spectacles to observe Miss Nancy, and, being satisfied with the result, nodded to her with a certain gloomy affability. Silence could not long continue under these circumstances. The gloomy lady, constantly soothed and appeased by her young companions, nevertheless challenged the cynical waiter, ran a tilt at him over the wretchedness of the coffee, demanded if he called *that* bacon, pined for the delicacies of her native land, and considerably increased the respect of the menial by her haughty bearing. Before the meal was concluded, she had sifted Miss Nancy as to when she came over, where she lived, and other particulars. In return she stated:

"I am Mrs. Abraham Sharpe, of Norton, and this is my daughter's husband, Mr. Vidal. We are traveling for pleasure," with a dry, mirthless laugh. "It is the *season*, now, you know, although that does us no good. We should not be in this *hole* otherwise."

"Dear mamma, one can not expect every thing in traveling," protested the bride, who cared not if she feasted on leathery muffins, so long as Richard was beside her.

"It might be worse," added the bridegroom, cheerfully.

"I call it a hole," repeated Mrs. Sharpe, with a triumphant glance around, which included the waiter, the sideboard, and Miss Nancy. "Now, what do you suppose they asked us for a suite of plain rooms at Brown's Hotel, in Dover Street? Twelve guineas a week, without food, wine, lights, or service, as I am a Christian. Then the English complain of the extortion of American hotels."

"I want to know!" exclaimed Miss Nancy, involuntarily; then blushed. The cynical waiter was grinning behind a battered caster.

At an early hour Miss Nancy betook herself to the Langham Hotel, and on the way was dazzled by a first glimpse of the Horse Guards, those living statues in superb trappings of her early dreams. Disappointment awaited her. Mrs. Cocks was out; the Piermans, father and daughter, were with her; Mrs. Pierman pleaded headache as an excuse for not receiving Miss Nancy. The latter bit her lip, and wrote a line on her card requesting that the address of Mr. Howard Denby should be sent her. Mrs. Pierman did not know the address of Mr. Denby; but would inquire.

Miss Nancy turned away deeply annoyed. Mrs. Pierman sunk back on her sofa with the conviction that this was solely a subterfuge by which to join their party again, and decided to say nothing about the matter. Blanche would make such a fuss. She was half jealous of the influence Nancy had gained over her daughter.

As she once more emerged on the busy world the spirit of Miss Nancy rose within her breast. What! was she to allow one woman's power for annoyance to blind her eyes to the scene about her? Every street

and stone of the world's metropolis was sacred to her from long association—seemed to belong to herself from a common ancestry.

Wandering on, she found herself in the twilight gloom of a small chapel, where the delicate profile of a marble woman lying in state, with folded, mutilated hands, came between her and the light. She was a pilgrim at the shrine of Marie Stuart. All about her was the rich glow of windows shedding rays of crimson and purple athwart the dusk of lofty arches, and shadowy aisles lost in the vista of chancel, tomb, and roof. Ah me! might not Mrs. Pierman be forgotten in the solemn, reposeful grandeur of this temple, where Nancy felt like casting the shoes from off her feet as holy ground? She touched a fold of the marble robe. Queen Mary's face was not less cold and passionless.

"What was the secret of your life?" whispered Nancy. "You made the most intense enemies, the warmest adherents, and excited the most virulent hatred in your day. Was it religious bigotry on your part, or theirs? Now, Madame de Sevigné soothed the vanity of those who would have been lovers to the state of friendship, without incurring enmity. Was the contrast between you two difference of race, or degree of feeling?"

A verger stood at her elbow, and Miss Nancy, fearing he might esteem her a little mad, moved away with a last glance at the tomb. A funeral was taking place, the coffin preceded by dean and clergy, and a file of choristers singing the prescribed sentences for the dead. The bier rested on trestles before the altar rails; the clergyman moved toward the sacrarium; "Domine Refugium" chanted the choir. Thence the body was borne to the grave through the gate of the south transept, mourners heaping ferns and white flowers on the oaken coffin.

Eager, upturned face of Handel; Mrs. Siddons, in majestic pose; dust of Henry the Builder; and in the west aisle a slab crowned by fresh flowers to the memory of David Livingstone. The British lion upheld crests and shields; Fame, poised on tiptoe, with laurel crown and trumpet; Grief drooped in classical drapery; archangels descending on snowy pinions claimed released souls; and yet Miss Nancy longed to place flowers on this simple slab in preference to all. The words of Addison rang in her ears as she emerged into day once more:

"When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me. When I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out. When I see kings lying by those who deposed them; when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men who divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind. When I read the dates of tombs, some who died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all be contemporaries, and make our appearance together."

Wandering on, Miss Nancy found herself standing before Miss Thompson's picture in the Royal Academy, the "Twenty-eighth Regiment at Quatre Bras." What nerve and strength for a woman's hand, touching this chord of national pride with firm, courageous purpose! How the Polish Lancers hurl themselves, riders and steeds, down upon that square formed in the tall rye, where the stern man, the cool veteran, and laughing boy await them! Miss Nancy gazed and gazed until she saw only through the rolling smoke-clouds and heaps of fallen dead, in the laughing, boyish face enjoying the sport, the deepest pathos of war. It was a woman's work, and she gloried in it. On the opposite wall, like the peace and calm of evening after the hot life and fierce struggle of noonday, was the "Last Muster"—Sunday at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, and the old pensioners seated with folded hands. Miss Nancy strove to trace a link between the abounding vitality of the battle-field and this chilly repose of old age; but the wrinkled faces and silvered hair told no heroic tales: it was evening, and each prepared for rest.

Pages in the book of memory, these, to be turned again many a time by Miss Nancy.

Here was Queen Mary again, seated stiffly in a dark chamber, with quaint yellow sleeves to her gown, arguing with John Knox, who frowned on the fair woman as darkly as gathering fate. There were glimpses of blue sea and sloping downs; interiors of Welsh farm-houses, with old crones seated beside the wide chimneys, where day came faintly through the aperture above; and the golden glow of Italian landscapes, garnering the warmth of benignant sun-rays in clusters of purple grapes overhead, and little laughing children below, their dust-stained bare feet presented to view, while they lounged against a ruined wall. Busts of ladies amazed Miss Nancy at every turn. She was not an educated critic, and only receptive of all light and color, but heads disfigured by the extravagant coiffures of the day must be indeed a revelation.

Fancy Venus, Ariadne, Persephone with a marble chignon, or huge braids rising in a peak on the top of the head, and thus destroying all symmetry of outline! Sufficiently grotesque in real life are these mounds of false hair, without making of art a mockery.

Wandering on, Madame Tussaud, most celebrated of catch-penny showwomen, kindly received our traveler. Cockneys and countrymen were staring delightedly at the in-

animate splendors, in a dead atmosphere, where dust and fresh air were alike excluded, as if the very tomb of many of the waxen celebrities were actually visited. The venerable Quaker on the seat still played his successful *rôle* of deception by his simulated interest in the gorgeous company of queens and warriors assembled. Miss Nancy found herself admiring deeply the pink royal babies in their blue-satin cot. Alas! was the child father to the man on the throne yonder, wearing the Masonic insignia, stout, heavy, bald? Lovely Eugénie, with the sloping, snowy shoulders, in a *distingué* toilet quite unlike the court costumes of the English ladies, pearly tints and black embroideries sweeping about her, smiled at vacancy. Dethroned Napoleon III. on his bier, done to the death, with a bluish pallor settling on his features, horribly real without the wreaths of immortelles. Charming Marie Antoinette, also smiling at vacancy, fondling an impossible dauphin, with an overdressed little Duchess d'Angoulême by her side; while Louis XVI., in the costume of the Saint Esprit, beyond, admired his own shoe on a velvet cushion. Henry VIII., most pugnacious of wax-dolls, in armor worn at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, surrounded by six angular doll wives in curious costumes, and with a strong family resemblance, Queen Katherine alone being accorded the distinction of holding a pet monkey. King Henry stared, and all the other dollies stared.

Miss Nancy was in the very best society. These splendid creatures never appeared except in full dress, dragging satin trains, wearing brilliant orders and medals, wrapped in the cloak of the Bath, clanking swords, and otherwise glorifying themselves. Princess Louise in white, with *tablier* of sparkling crystals, forever extended her hand to the Marquis of Lorne in Highland costume; Princess Mary of Teck always wore a nodding plume above her brow; the Queen eternally occupied her chair of state, and beamed upon her respective children in apple-green, pink, and yellow. Behind the Crown-Princess of Prussia a small, dark man, in Eastern dress, gazed at every one through spectacles with a malignant cynicism: this was the Shah of Persia, secretly amused, even in wax, either by European civilization, or that this same European civilization should receive such as he, a monster in despotism, on the face of the earth. Miss Nancy shivered as she looked at the patient, malignant little man in spectacles.

Madame Tussaud was so good as to inform her at every turn that she was used to great people, having been patronized by royal highnesses since time out of mind; and, myth though she might have become, Madame was still further aware that it was only respectful to make all living ladies handsome, at least with those charms of brow and feature inseparable from one's standard in effigies. Hence, in whatever direction Miss Nancy cast her wondering eyes among all the personages of royal or noble blood, her gaze fell upon forms of fair or majestic mien. One might indeed infer, from the flattering effigies in madame's collection, that homeliness of feature and insignificance of figure were physical disadvantages from which high-born persons are happily exempt.

There was a dull ringing in the visitor's ears, a yellow glow of sunshine beat on the glass sky-light, the pulseless atmosphere of both distinguished dead and living stifled her. What did it all mean?

Washington, patrician and dignified, in velvet small-clothes; General Grant, not to be recognized by his own mother; Dr. Keneally, with small, sarcastic mouth; Arthur Orton, a ponderous mystery; Lord Macaulay, where Joan of Arc should be; Charles Dickens, lounging in a corner with his hands in his pockets; Voltaire, withered and saturnine; Dr. Livingstone, greeted by a very swarthy and woolly Stanley. The Empress of Austria in pretty profile, gazed at her husband in gorgeous uniform, who listened with inattentive wax ear to Bismarck wielding a blank paper. Sergeant Bates, bearing the American flag through England, entirely out of place; Honqua, the tea-merchant, perpetually smiling; Berengaria, clinging affectedly to the arm of Cœur de Lion, in kingly raiment. William of Orange looked invincible command at his docile Queen Mary; all the Georges, posed in regal insignia. Interminable military councils were held by imposing figures that did not look at each other. Tom Thumb stood jauntily at the elbow of a florid and respectable William Penn. Closer and closer became the atmosphere. Madame Tussaud, despite her acquaintance with the best society, had become a horror before the knife or guillotine in the Chamber of Horrors was reached which shed the blood of twenty-two thousand victims.

Wandering on, Miss Nancy refreshed herself with tarts in a pastry-cook shop. There was a sense of triumph and exultation in her freedom; her spirits rose higher every hour. She was alone, but she was in old London at last! With her second tart she formed a resolution: she would drive in the Row, and see the *beau-monde* with her own eyes, the scene so often described to her in distant Briarbush by English novelists.

Behold our school-marm in a neat equipage, driven by a slim youth in buttons, guiding a high-stepping horse. She would have liked the companionship of Blanche Pierman, or even the young man, Howard Denby; her solitary enjoyment seemed selfish. Her cheeks glowed, her eyes sparkled as the slim youth pointed out various objects of interest with his whip. What would grandmother say? What would Briarbush think

of such magnificence? London, vast, noisy, oppressive. Was there any element of light-hearted gayety beneath the ponderous splendor of the "season?" Did people ever laugh in those state carriages, driven by a grave coachman? Was there sparkle of wit and repartee in the sombre houses, where powdered footmen occasionally appeared at the doors, in aspect full-blown peonies? Or were the votaries of fashion anxious about their dress, their bills, the prospects of their daughters, the possibility of others eclipsing them? Miss Nancy asked herself these questions as she was wheeled into Rotten Row.

The July sunshine, pale and cold, rested on the upper windows of palaces and hotels; a fog hung low over the meadows along the Serpentine. A line of glittering carriages preceded her, heavy landaus drawn by large, powerful horses, liveries resplendent with green, brown, and maroon satin. Portly old gentlemen, sometimes with lace cushions behind their venerable backs; terribly grand old dowagers, bottle-nosed and worldly-wise, with garlands of pink flowers on their bewigged old heads; girls, blooming and pretty, in startling toilets of white silk, satin jackets, and quaint Sir Joshua Cavalier hats. With clatter of flying hoofs and jingling harness, the leading four-in-hand of the year appeared, guided skillfully by the noble owner in person. A prim young lady in a high chariot, with aspect of *ennui* and abstraction, read a gilt-edged book, and glanced over the rim to note the effect on the wayside loungers. Nonsense held sway here as elsewhere. Then a second clatter of flying hoofs, a flash of brilliant scarlet, and the royal carriages passed, wending toward a garden party at Chiswick.

Miss Nancy was too absorbed in her novel surroundings to observe closely a second quiet equipage which had preceded her along the Ladies' Mile, until it turned. Lo! Mrs. Cocks and Mrs. Pierman, with their eyeglasses elevated, and their respective children seated opposite. Miss Nancy checked her carriage, and waved her hand: here was the opportunity to obtain Howard Denby's address. The occupants of the other carriage did not see her. Blanche, charming in lavender, with roses in her hat, was chatting with Rockwell in an animated strain; the two matrons appeared depressed. In their hearts they were both crushed by the grandeur of the British aristocracy.

"I don't see much beauty in all this display; and what a horrible climate!" Mrs. Pierman was saying when Nancy waved her hand.

Here lay the difference most important in travelers: Miss Nancy could completely forget herself in delighted contemplation of the crowd; Mrs. Cocks, born to a sense of her own importance, and Mrs. Pierman bred to it, could by no means set aside self. Fain would both have been invited within the charmed circles of the London season, if only to write home the news. Otherwise they were depressed, and criticised the pageant disparagingly through their eyeglasses. Competition was not in Miss Nancy's thoughts. She was a spectator, and might have been a ghost for any interest she was likely to receive from these throngs of strangers.

Although the American party had not recognized her, she drove back to Mulcher's Hotel, reviewing the experience of her day with elated satisfaction. In the coffee-room the cynical waiter again served her. Mrs. Sharpe was not visible.

"I never drink wine," said Nancy, severely, when offered a card. "I belong to a temperance society."

The cynical waiter smirked at one of the murky paintings, as if calling Heaven to witness that nothing could surprise him after this.

"I should like some ice-water instead," added Miss Nancy, guilelessly.

Oh yes; Mulcher's Hotel supplied ice-water. The cynical waiter performed a pantomime over the counter on the landing in obtaining the luxury, which betrayed that he had mistaken his calling, and caused both blonde and brunette nymphs to laugh immoderately. Miss Nancy eat the mutton of loneliness, and decided recklessly to close the eventful day with ice-cream for dessert.

Yes; Mulcher's Hotel could also furnish ice-cream, in form a small yellow lump in a wine-glass, in flavor peculiarly like the frozen custard happily blended with arrowroot of Fourth-of-July festivals in rural districts of America.

A man ascended the winding stairs in advance of her when she withdrew; his shadow was visible along the wall; he entered the room opposite to her own, and closed the door. Miss Nancy scarcely noticed the circumstance at the time. When she opened her trunk, the first object she beheld was the pocket-book.

A whole day had passed without restoration to the owner, without discovery of any clue to the mention of Uncle Simon's name.

CHAPTER VII.

SAVED BY THE POLAR BEAR.

NEXT morning a very small boy emerged from the Langham Hotel, and gazed upon the London world after his own fashion. He wore the garb of a juvenile sailor (dark blue, with a broad linen collar), and his little legs were incased in stockings of vivid scarlet. A soft, peachy face, with rosy cheeks and small red mouth, sometimes revealing sharp white teeth, glanced out from beneath

the straw yachting-hat, but the dark eyes usually had a very naughty sparkle of mischief in them.

The small boy's name was Tommy Pierman, and the Big Boy had vanished from his horizon. When his *bonne*, the genteel, sallow-faced Marie, in a becoming muslin cap, led him one way, he inevitably pulled in an opposite direction. This course of action brought them to Hyde Park instead of Regent Street, where Marie anticipated enjoying the shop windows.

"*Que tu es méchant!*" sighed the young woman, and became interested in a closely shaven personage of military aspect, who appeared to be a Gallic exile.

Tommy had his own views of travel. He carried under one arm on this eventful morning a red-bound copy of Hans Christian Andersen, as many tourists carry "Murray," or "Baedecker," and no inducements presented by Marie could avail to make him quit his hold on the precious volume.

Hans Andersen dead! The good old man who has earned the sweetest, most enduring fame of the age, perhaps of any age, in the love of the whole world? Did he not hold the golden key of every household and in every land through his influence over the children? These children will carry the "Ugly Duckling," the "Ice Maiden," the "Snow Queen" into youth's more ardent coloring; will in turn live over again their childish delight with their own children as they revert to this first, best, and purest page in literature. All of us rejoice that the son of the shoe-maker of Odense lived to fulfill the prophecy of the spaa-wife in the popularity of his genius, after the struggle of early boyhood. All of us were with him when the King of Denmark decorated him on his seventieth and last birthday, when the author was presented with an edition of his works in fifteen languages. In the serenity of ripe age, in the full enjoyment of a nobly earned popularity, he has fallen asleep, our dear old Andersen, leaving us the imperishable jewel of his genius to cherish in our hearts, and beside our hearth-stones. Let the arctic snows shroud his grave, the soul-flower will still bloom beneath as the skies will glow with the wonders of the aurora he described. For the "Marsh King's Daughter," for "The North Wind," for the "Moon's Pictures," we drop a flower from America on the poet's bier; and surely his welcome to heavenly realms must be the choirs of children's voices.

The small boy, Tommy, clasping Hans Andersen's stories firmly to his breast, gazed about him. Before him rose the Albert Memorial, where beautiful shapes seem to have sprung from the earth when a queen waved her sceptre. Who of us from the four quarters of the globe will not gladly support the mausoleum of the good Albert?—Asia, with her elephant; Africa, with her camel; America, with her bison. What energy and strength are displayed in this last group! The Indian looks forth as if in dawning wonder of the future, in contrast with Europe's tranquil repose amidst the arts, or the indolent grace of the East.

"Forward to the sunset," the fair form, star-girdled, seems to command, upholding here in the Old World the tomb of a prince. Harmony of soft gray sky above subdued the gilded richness of arch and shaft, and the snowy gleam of marble, and below the venerable trees rose like black columns beneath a dome of verdure, and the golden green lawns of that park which George I., "stupid old drone from the German hive," thought to include in royal demesne, and was informed by his prime minister that such an infringement of public rights would cost him precisely one crown.

Marie talked volubly with the Gallic exile, who proved to be a courier. A wicked smile dimpled the pretty face of Master Tommy, the little red legs edged away cautiously, their owner displaying an absorbing interest in the Albert Memorial, until, sheltered by that noble structure, the active members were put to another use. Away sped Tommy then after two objects which had excited his curiosity for some minutes past—a little boy mounted on a fat pony, and followed by a groom on foot. Of course Marie had dragged her charge away from the temptation to accost this equestrian. Doubtless the little monsieur was a milord, and would be shocked by the familiarity.

"He is a boy, and I'll bet he isn't nine years old: I'm ten," Tommy had returned, stoutly.

Opposition had strengthened his resolution. Tommy ran after and overtook the fat pony.

"Say, can he trot real fast?" piped the little man, laying a hand on the pony's mane.

The small lordling gazed down at the questioner with chubby dignity. The tall groom, of most wooden aspect, bestowed on Tommy a blank stare.

"I've got a pony at home, and it can go like any thing; two-forty on a plank-road. I call it Jim, and they are keeping it in the country now. I wish Jim was here," with a wistful glance at the quadruped.

"You live in America, I fancy," observed the lordling, also patting the pony.

"Yes, I guess so. Where else should I live? Do you come from there too?" Tommy put the question with the utmost *sang-froid*. Distinctions of class were not as yet clear to his little mind.

Here was a boy mounted on a fat pony. As the lark soars to the sky, as the duck seeks the water-side, so did Tommy's scarlet-clad legs bear him swiftly to the lordling's side.

"I am English," returned the lordling, simply, and as if the possibility of being any thing else had never been before presented to his youthful imagination.

"Your ludship," interposed the wooden groom, touching his hat, and glancing scornfully at Tommy as if he were an intrusive fly.

"Time me, Hopkins, and stand back," said the lordling, touching the pony with his toy whip.

"I will," cried Tommy, and drew from his manly vest-pocket a fairy watch, like a drop of shining gold, with his monogram on the back. This was a gift of his fond mamma's last Christmas.

Away trotted the pony, and Tommy the wistful was left a prey to the wooden-faced groom, who called him a Yankee, inquired after his relatives, with especial reference to his mother, finally striding away after his charge with derisive laughter, and returned no more.

"You are an ugly, hateful old thing!" cried Tommy, clenching his fists with a sense of burning injury, in which the groom's chaff had not so much effect as keen disappointment that he had not been invited to ride the fat pony.

Why should not the lordling have given him, Tommy Pierman, a ride? He would have done as much for a stranger boy.

"I don't care! Jim can beat him at a trot, anyhow."

Mischief was rife in the bosom of Master Pierman, and Marie had not missed him. The little scarlet legs emerged from the park-gates and crossed to the Albert Hall; he would run away, and hide. A fierce-looking individual, with black whiskers, at the entrance demanded a sixpence, which Master Pierman paid from his new purse, of which he was becomingly proud, and climbed the stairs as directed. He would have liked to ask the man with black whiskers where he was going; but a smile on the other's face deterred him. Nay, more; despite his fairy watch, and his new purse well lined with shillings and sixpences, the young traveler very much feared being put out by the black-whiskered person, and ignominiously restored to Marie.

There were crystal conservatories, corridors lined with cabinets, porcelain, enamels, vases, cases of lace, all fragments of an unsuccessful industrial exhibition, still left for Tommy's inspection. The hall, a dusky interior, was reached by weary climbing of little feet to that upper gallery where pictures seemed to have found a lofty and dignified oblivion on the walls. Tommy surveyed the field at a glance. An old man sat dozing over a desk of catalogues; groups of visitors were visible here and there through the arches of the gallery. A young woman presided at a refreshment stand over stale cakes in glass dishes, which nobody appeared ever to purchase, sandwiches of dismal complexion, and barley-sugar. Tommy went up to the young woman, and purchased some sticks of barley-sugar, as a preliminary means to further enjoyment. He was safe; Marie could not find him, and drag him away to shop-windows.

Lo! a policeman in helmet appeared, and walked straight toward him. Had the policeman been sent for *him?* Tommy, aided by a guilty conscience, feared the law like all criminals; his knees trembled, he clasped Hans Andersen and the package of barley-sugar closer, prepared for the worst. The young woman at the bar had taken a mysterious bottle from some secret recess, and poured a white fluid into a wine-glass. With jaunty aspect the knight in helmet advanced, and accepted the wine-glass; a pungent, nauseating odor was diffused on the atmosphere. The potion was the policeman's noonday "nipper" of gin, and Tommy was saved.

The fugitive placed half of the gallery between himself and the refreshment bar, then took a chair. Laying Hans Andersen and the barley-sugar on his knee, he looked around.

Down below were rows of seats, and a stage lost in crimson twilight; the rich tones of Tietjens, the silvery notes of Nilsson, the pure sweetness of Albani, blended to an echo of the living presence there for Tommy. On the wall behind was a large canvas, which attracted him by its vivid coloring. The scene represented an Eastern court with terraces visible beyond; in the foreground a woman reclined on embroidered cushions, with a pipe beside her, and a negro boy approaching behind. A ray of daylight from an unseen window fell full on this negro slave, who seemed to gather all the coloring of the picture; his yellow satin tunic caught a shimmer like sunshine, the slippers on his feet glittered, the folds of his turban became a glory above his sable face, the gold salver he bore sparkled like a jewel. He looked at Tommy, and smiled.

Now, why should a negro boy in a picture smile at him? Tommy could not understand it in the least.

"This is the way out," said the negro boy.

"But I am not going away," said Tommy, crossly.

"Then look out for the policeman," said the negro boy, winking, and, dropping on one knee gracefully, he served the lady with coffee.

"I don't wish to be caught by the policeman," said Tommy, rising hastily.

"Very well; this is a door," said the negro boy.

"No, it's a picture," said Tommy; but before he knew it the canvas had opened, and

the negro boy was running before him, like a sunbeam, along the marble terrace.

The next moment Tommy found himself in a garden, trim paths bordered with shrubbery branching on either side, and a tunnel opening before him.

"Why, it's like the Zoölogical Gardens!" exclaimed Tommy; and just as he entered the tunnel a handsome tiger strolled in at the other end.

Tommy's heart beat loud and fast. He fell on his hands and knees, and awaited breathlessly the approach of the noble beast, pressing himself against the wall. The tiger seemed to block the whole passage; the hairs standing erect upon its body were visible on both sides of the stealthily gliding form. Tommy felt the hot breath scorch his cheek. Oh that he had remained with Marie, and escaped such deadly peril! The tiger must have broken the bars of its cage.

Nearer and nearer crept the velvet paws, the crouching body, the great, green globes of eyes so brilliant in the darkness, when a little creature, hopping absurdly, as if on short crutches, skipped past Tommy, and was instantly caught by the tiger.

"It's a kangaroo," said Tommy, excitedly, and hastened to the entrance where the poor little kangaroo lay dead in the path, and the tiger had stopped, wiping its mouth with its paws, like a great cat.

"Mind you, the murder was committed by you in the tunnel," said the tiger.

"Oh, oh, what a fib!" said Tommy, astonished by his own courage in contradicting the tiger.

"He prevaricates," said the tiger, with dignity, addressing a rhinoceros and elephant that came hastening along.

"I saw him kill the kangaroo, and prepare to eat it in the tunnel," pursued the tiger, glibly.

"I never did!" cried Tommy, indignantly. "Boys don't eat 'em, 'cos they like to play with kangaroos better."

"You hear him," snarled the tiger, with a glint of the eye that made Tommy's heart sink into his small boots.

"I guess I'll go home now, although I should like to see the bears again," returned our hero, striving to be calm.

"Ho, ho!" sniffed the rhinoceros, and poked Tommy with his snout.

"Ho, ho!" echoed the good-natured elephant. "Shall I swing him over the boundary with my trunk? One, two—one, two."

"Don't!" said Tommy, feeling giddy. "Your trunk goes like a pendulum. Do stop!"

"Justice! justice!" cried the tiger.

"Justice!" piped innumerable little voices, as if in response; and along trooped all the kangaroo relatives of the slain—small, gray kangaroos, with innocent rabbit faces, and elderly, grizzled kangaroos, with vast experience of life as travelers, having hopped hither all the way from Australia.

"Take him to the lions for judgment," said the tiger, fiercely.

"Yes, yes!" cried the bereaved kangaroo family, wringing their little fore paws in great sorrow over their affliction.

The rhinoceros and elephant placed themselves on either side of the prisoner, like constables; the tiger and the kangaroos, bearing the victim in their midst, following. It was a mournful procession enough. Tommy's fear only checked anger at every step, for the artful tiger inflamed the indignation of his associates more and more against the stranger, and there was also danger of being trampled to death by the huge animals guarding him. This was worse than the policeman in helmet.

The seals lolled in the water with a theatrical aspect, or rose to the surface with a professional sort of "give-me-a-penny" manner. Tommy would have stopped to gaze at them, but the rhinoceros rolled one small eye at him in warning to move on. Never had he been in such queer company. The interesting giraffes, carrying their heads in the air; the brisk, pugnacious little beasts of the zebra tribe; the surly hippopotamus—all stared at Tommy as he passed. The parrots, flashing like rainbows from perch to perch, shrieked in discordant clamor; and the monkeys stood on their heads with delight over the adventure, chattering in every imaginable key the while.

"This is the spot for foul play," hissed the tiger in Tommy's ear. "When the monkeys are talking, you could not hear a locomotive whistle. Say two words and I'll eat *you*."

"Oh, please—" whimpered Tommy, and stopped, for the elephant was saying,

"The shortest route is through Peccary Crescent and along Wild-boar Terrace."

Along Peccary Crescent they accordingly went, a good locality, where all the little-pig people of foreign extraction dwelt in neat mansions, and squealed at Tommy, though whether in sympathy or derision it was impossible to decide.

The lions lay in their cages, basking in the sun, their rich fur, tawny orange, cream, and velvet-brown, looking soft and inviting a caress, as did their apparent good humor.

"Cast him into the bear-pit, or give him to the American rattlesnake," said the lions, yawning drowsily, as if Tommy's fate were of no consequence to them.

"He is pronounced guilty, then," proclaimed the tiger, with ferocious joy.

"Allow me," croaked a grave voice, and a venerable cockatoo came forward.

It was observed that the tiger turned pale at this unexpected intrusion, and unsheathed its claws, laying hold of Tommy's jacket at the same moment.

"I have evidence to give for the defense," said the cockatoo, standing on one leg, and cocking its beak in the air.

(Tommy did not know that he was "the defense.")

A commotion followed these words; the lions rose to their feet; and Tommy, for the first time, observed the polar bear. That majestic animal occupied a fine house alone, and was further accorded a tank of water, which might account for the snowy whiteness of his coat. The polar bear advanced to the bars and listened. Being duly sworn by a cassowary, the cockatoo deposed:

"I am a white cockatoo with a green top-knot. I have resided here for several years, and the climate has injured my otherwise sweet voice. I am a bird of regular habits and good character, therefore my word should be relied upon. I was swinging in my hoop on the edge of the path to-day when I saw the late kangaroo clear the open space in one leap, and the tiger follow. The little boy is innocent. I am sure of it, because he did not try to pull my tail in passing, and the tiger brought out the kangaroo dead before the boy appeared."

"And a precious row you are all making! I only wish I had eaten it, and the boy too," growled the tiger, still clawing Tommy's jacket, menacingly.

What was this? Tommy, with a gasp of terror, had wrenched himself away from his enemy, and ran toward the cage where stood the polar bear. There was a clamor of mingled voices behind, and the patter of pursuing steps.

"Oh, hide me, do!" panted Tommy; and the polar bear, extending one paw, drew him through the bars as easily as if he had been a mouse, just as the tiger came up with the constables, elephant and rhinoceros, who had been so shamefully influenced by that wily beast. He was saved by the polar bear.

A voice said in his ear,

"Ah, here he is! Tommy dear, wake up."

Tommy found himself again seated on the chair in the upper gallery of the Albert Hall. Below was the crimson twilight of shrouded seats; on the opposite wall the negro boy, in amber-satin tunic, presented the gold salver to his mistress, and still smiled; Hans Andersen and the package of barley-sugar had fallen on the floor. Miss Nancy Hawse was shaking him by the arm, and behind her stood Marie, flushed excitement superseding her usual sallow calmness.

"You get out!" said Tommy, very rudely, inserting his knuckles into both eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

"LIES HAVE LONG LEGS."

"I SHALL take him home," said Miss Nancy, firmly.

"But, madame, we know the streets," protested Marie. "We can not get again lost."

"Very likely not; but if you stop to gossip with every Frenchman you meet, Tommy may get again lost," said Miss Nancy, sharply. "Fancy what a victim a well-dressed child is for thieves in a great city."

Marie compressed her thin lips, and looked askance at Miss Nancy out of her black eyes.

"Tommy darling, come with me," coaxed Miss Nancy, and her heart overflowed to the poor little man, who might have proved a prey to the world had she not found him.

"I don't wish to," grumbled Tommy, his brain still perplexed by his abrupt recall from dream-land, and disposed to regard the lady as an enemy.

"You must," she rejoined, chilled by the repulse, and growing silent.

Marie sat opposite in the cab, and still eyed her with compressed lips and sullen aspect.

Earlier that day Miss Nancy had emerged on the landing of Mulcher's Hotel with the resolution to find Howard Denby. The boots of her opposite neighbor were still outside his door; she could not refrain from glancing at them.

Character exists in boots. There is your dapper, slim boot, highly polished, which stands naturally in the first position of the dancing-master on the mat; your large, square, obstinate boot, planted most firmly straight ahead, and somehow associated with the mud of this life; your cheerful poor devil of a boot, possibly worn shabby, but making the best of it with a patch or so, equally suggestive of a whistling owner. Miss Nancy could discover none of these peculiarities, however. The boots opposite were those of a young man, no doubt, and one aware that he had a well-curved instep; still they were neither foppish nor churlish.

She went down-stairs meditating with satisfaction that Mrs. Pierman would send her the address of Mr. Denby, and she be thus spared the further humiliation of seeking the society of persons who disliked her.

Mrs. Sharpe greeted Miss Nancy with a pleasant cordiality, and the lonely woman's nature warmed toward this lady, who veiled much kindness beneath a frosty exterior. There was no note from Mrs. Pierman. Again did Miss Nancy wander forth into the London streets. Covent Garden was one bloom of flowers, and scarcely less glowing tinted fruits, strawberries of superb size and flavor, luscious gooseberries, pyramids of ruddy cherries, golden greengages, and the rich purple tints of plums. Never had Miss Nan-

cy beheld such strawberries, gooseberries, or plums. She paused to feast her eyes on the show, despite the mire underfoot, the Babel of voices, the moving throngs of market-men poising baskets above their heads. Vans passed, filled with charity-children making excursions into the country, flags waving, shrill little voices cheering, and discordant bands braying in unison. Most humane and touching spectacle furnished by the London streets. Miss Nancy recalled vividly Farjeon's "Golden Grain."

Here was a chemist's, with a placard in the window announcing American "Pick-me-up" bitters; there a Spread-eagle Tavern, dingy and of tarnished aspect, as if the London fog had taken all spirit out of the noble bird. Later, Miss Nancy found herself pausing near a great railway station. Yes, indeed, a holiday was due, a bank holiday, and already the throng was departing in search of country. What a lesson in humanity were these crowds striving to catch a gleam of sunshine in a workaday world! Hansom-cabs tilted along at break-neck speed; four-wheelers, laden with luggage, plunged after. At a warning shriek from a locomotive, foot-passengers ran wildly, paterfamilias with basket and bundles, materfamilias with the fat baby, old gentlemen limping hastily beside toddling old ladies. Two slender young clerks appeared carrying their box between them, with occasional pauses to change hands and rest.

"Oh, if I were Queen Victoria, or the amiable Princess of Wales, or Baroness Burdett Coutts, I would just station my secretary at such a railway dépôt to slip sly sovereigns into the hands of the young lads, the anxious mothers carrying the babies, and the patient old men colored by life surroundings to the hue of their own parchments." Miss Nancy thus soliloquized, aglow with visionary enthusiasm—"They should all have *one* holiday."

She had agreed with Mrs. Sharpe over the tea-pot that summer never visited these isles. Now a dome of glass seemed to have been placed over the whole metropolis, converting it into an exhausted hive. The atmosphere was dull, opaque, lifeless, producing quiescence, an oppression, unlike clear, fierce heat which scorches, and a damp, misty vapor stifled the lungs. Just when Miss Nancy had arrived at her sage conclusion concerning summer heats, this atmosphere crept upon, swathed, and suffocated her panting senses, clogged her untiring energies, and clung to her like the adhesive touch of London soot, which leaves nothing pure. Pity the poor of the East End at such times, the blighted, feeble lives longing for one breath of fresh air. She would see the Albert Memorial again, that magnet to her fancy, and return to Mulcher's Hotel, exhausted.

The golden spire rose before her, the broad steps invited her nearer approach, when a *bonne* ran against her with an exclamation of alarm. Miss Nancy recognized Marie, and, turning, caught her by the arm.

"What has happened?" she demanded, struck by Marie's flushed countenance.

Then she heard the direful news: Tommy was there a moment before—*mais oui, le p'tit ange!*—and now he was gone! Marie immediately cast the burden of Tommy's disappearance on Miss Nancy's shoulders; high and low always did shift responsibility in that pleasing fashion. Tommy was lost in London, and Miss Nancy must find him.

Her first thought was the Albert Hall opposite. She saw in it a rock of safety, beyond which she dreaded to seek the open sea of widely diverging streets. She shuddered to think of "Florence Dombey," stripped by "good Mrs. Brown." A man with black whiskers received sixpence admission at the entrance. Yes, he remembered a little boy who entered Hall a matter of arf an hour ago. Miss Nancy looked at Marie severely; the girl tossed her head, and protested volubly it was but ten minutes.

"He may have gone out of the other entrance to the Industrial Buildings by this time," said Miss Nancy, hastening swiftly up the stairs.

What need to describe how they searched behind cabinets and in dark nooks, with ever-increasing dread of not discovering the little scarlet legs or yachting hat, until the gallery was reached at last.

Mrs. Pierman and her daughter Blanche were deeply interested in a discussion on court gossip with Mrs. Cocks. The latter lady, with her snowy hair towering in a soft puffy roll above her rosy, dimpled face, was explaining matters to her respectful listeners in Mrs. Pierman's sitting-room.

"The queen can not receive Cardinal Manning, because—" Mrs. Cocks, who prided herself on being *au fait* with the habits of the rulers of the earth, had just said, when the door opened, and Marie rushed in.

"Madame, *mille pardons!* but mademoiselle would carry him away."

Mrs. Pierman rose to her feet in bewilderment just as Miss Nancy appeared, leading Tommy by the hand.

"Oh, my dear Miss Hawse!" cried Blanche, running forward and embracing her. "Why have you not been here before? Has Tommy been playing tricks? You naughty darling! I can see you have been in mischief. Ah, I know you, sir!"

The young girl knelt on the carpet, and threw her arms around Tommy, who permitted the caress moodily.

"It was the boy on a pony like Jim," he vouchsafed to explain. "Then she came and took me away."

"Took you away where, pet?" asked Blanche, smiling up at Miss Nancy.

"I don't know," vaguely.

"What a goose!" laughed Blanche, and rose to her feet, conscious of a chilling coldness which had fallen upon the room.

Mrs. Cocks was greeting Miss Nancy with dimpling affability: if there was disturbance in the atmosphere, the lady was deaf and blind to the possibility. Marie was whispering to Mrs. Pierman in the window, with eager gesticulation, and her mistress glanced toward Miss Nancy from time to time as she listened.

"Please be seated," pleaded Blanche, disturbed by her mother's lack of cordiality. "Mamma, Miss Hawse wishes to speak with you. Surely Marie can wait."

"Take Tommy to his room," said Mrs. Pierman to the *bonne*, and at length turned her attention to Miss Nancy, who, mortified by her cold greeting, remained standing, in spite of Mrs. Cocks's gentle purling stream of talk, and the evident distress of Blanche.

"I found your child in the Albert Hall; he had strayed away while Marie was gossiping with some stranger in the park. She is not to be trusted in London streets, I fear, unless this day's experience should prove a lesson to her." Miss Nancy spoke in a dry tone, under the weight of an indefinable suspicion, which was disapproval of herself.

Was Mrs. Pierman flint by nature, that she did not respond in warm gratitude to any one for the restoration of her child? She asked herself this question with a shock of wonder and alarm that sent the blood to her face.

"I am very much obliged to you," said Mrs. Pierman's mouth, with prim formality, while Mrs. Pierman's eyes flashed a glance of irritable anger. "Marie may have her faults—who of us is without them?—still, she is an excellent, faithful servant in intention, and has lived with me five years."

For a moment Miss Nancy was dumb, then the color died away slowly out of her face, and she replied,

"I have merely done my duty. You know best."

An awkward silence ensued. Mrs. Cocks, deaf and blind to the ripple of outward circumstance, suggested that a day spent at Sydenham would vastly amuse Miss Nancy.

"Do not forget the gallery of the Victoria Cross," smiled the lady. "There you will see the soldier's face illuminated by the lighted shell he is carrying beyond the magazine of Gibraltar, and sepoys trodden in the dust with a last expiring glitter of hatred in their eyes by soldiers in scarlet and gold uniforms."

"Yes, very interesting," assented Miss Nancy, absently. She must not lose the opportunity of inquiring about Howard Denby. "Will you oblige me with the address of your friend, Mr. Denby? You have not sent it to my hotel, I presume," with a glance at Mrs. Pierman.

The latter flushed slightly. She had told one fib hastily, and must now add another to strengthen her position. Many a fabric of falsehood has been built up in this way; the first foundation lie could not be retracted.

"You are mistaken, I am sure. I know nothing about Mr. Denby," she said, languidly, and with the aspect of awaiting Miss Nancy's departure to relieve her feelings in animated speech.

"I am sorry you should have forgotten the matter," said Nancy, gravely. "I have been waiting to restore something to him."

"I am ignorant of his address. He promised to call, but has not done so," said Mrs. Cocks. "My son shall find him, if possible. Such a clever man as he is, and such a proud creature, too."

Blanche twisted the golden links of her chatelaine in her slender fingers, and looked steadily at the carpet.

"I must find him," said Miss Nancy, and then, somehow, she was in the hotel corridor, with Blanche Pierman's hand on her arm.

"Wait until papa comes home. He will understand," whispered the girl. "No? Then I shall come to see you in the morning; and, oh! what have you got of Howard Denby's?"

"Your mother would not wish you to visit me, evidently. I have Mr. Denby's pocket-book, my dear, saved from the wreck. He rescued you, Blanche; never forget that."

"I have not forgotten, but I was not worth saving. Miss Hawse, I am a mercenary wretch. There!"

Mrs. Pierman had seated herself beside Mrs. Cocks, and produced her pocket-handkerchief. She was trembling with nervous excitement.

"Thank Heaven, she is gone at last! I should have broken down soon. Mrs. Cocks, that woman tried to rob me of my child! Marie found her dragging him into a cab, and she forbade the *bonne* to follow, only the faithful creature threatened to call the police."

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Cocks, one of her dimples disappearing in grave astonishment.

"You may well say so. It is revenge!" sobbed Mrs. Pierman, shaking like a leaf from head to foot. "She has always been in love with my husband, and now she is trying to be quits with me, his wife."

Mrs. Cocks nodded her snowy head gently; her sympathy could not be considered demonstrative even now.

"Truth, my dear Mrs. Pierman, is ever stranger than fiction," she said, musingly.

Poor Miss Nancy went away stung with the conviction that she was misunderstood, and would be misrepresented to John. What

transformation had passed over Margaret Pierman that she should even take amiss—nay, with sheer ingratitude—the rescue of Tommy? Was she mad, literally out of her mind, that common sense failed to influence her? John could not be so foolish as to believe idle tales. In her anger she made a dozen hasty resolves *en route* for Mulcher's Hotel, and discarded each before reaching the door of that charming abode. John was Margaret's husband, and she was glad to have saved Tommy as his son.

Dinner was left untouched by the disconcerted lady. She even shed a few tears while removing her bonnet—hot, angry tears of outraged pride—of which she was immediately ashamed as a weakness. Why could not people be polite in this world, if nothing more? Here was she, Nancy Hawse, treated like a culprit for finding Tommy Pierman, and denouncing his nurse. In preoccupied vexation, she suffered the cynical waiter to remove her soup and meat untasted; her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes fixed on the dismal oil-paintings opposite.

Mrs. Sharpe glanced in the door of the coffee-room with the very aspect of one rambling forth in search of possible diversion.

"My son-in-law, Mr. Vidal, is going to the opera," she said. "Do come into my sitting-room. Seems to me the Hole grows worse daily."

Seated in Mrs. Sharpe's room, with that lady in sympathetic mood opposite, Miss Nancy's depression was lightened. Before she was wholly prepared to reveal her secret, Mrs. Sharpe, spectacles on nose, had pounced upon it.

"Bless you! the nurse told a lie to clear herself of blame," cried the lady. "Can you not see through that?"

"I never thought of it. Why, I brought her home safely," returned Miss Nancy.

"It's low cunning, my dear," pursued Mrs. Sharpe, rubbing her hands, well pleased with her own cleverness. "You do not expect as a lady to match low cunning. Now, I have known the children's nurse, a snub-nosed creature who could not write her own name, twine the whole family around her little finger through influence over the mistress. Yes, indeed. In the first place, she bullies the children not to tell tales of her; in the second, she studies and plays on the mother's weaknesses; and, if all these efforts fail, what is her third step?"

"I am sure I can not decide," replied Nancy, with a somewhat superior smile.

Mrs. Sharpe raised her forefinger impressively.

"She tells the mistress fibs about opinions expressed by certain persons of darling Johnnie, or Susy's bad manners. This spark never fails to ignite the magazine in the maternal bosom."

"It seems so absurd for the uneducated classes to have such influence," said Miss Nancy, in her school-mistress vein.

"A pity, no doubt; but as long as we live such influence will exist. Depend upon that fact."

Could it be that Marie had rushed into Mrs. Pierman's presence prepared to exculpate herself by telling a falsehood?

"Now, there is my friend, Martha Dunne," pursued Mrs. Sharpe, taking up an open letter from the table, as if impelled to a reciprocal confidence. "She is in Edinburgh, and nothing will induce her to come here to me at present. I don't say that her hobbies are unnatural, especially for an eccentric single woman, ahem! She is studying the question of woman's work, and she would go on her hands and knees to achieve her end. By-the-by, she was wrecked on the *Acis*, and her brother was drowned. Dear me, did you know them?"

Miss Nancy shook her head. She heard Mrs. Sharpe as one in a dream, and was obliged to feign interest. The scene of the afternoon was impressed on her brain, as if stamped by a hot iron. General conversation could not erase that sharp and deeply imprinted picture.

After that the ladies separated, mutually refreshed by their evening.

"She is a good soul," Mrs. Sharpe soliloquized while removing her cap. "She knows more about books and maps than humanity, however."

Miss Nancy wearily opened her well-read pocket Bible instinctively at the Psalms, that refuge for the discouraged and depressed, as well as the exultant. Morning brought a surprise for her. Blanche Pierman tripped up the stairs, smiling and blushing, with a blue feather in her hat. She shook her finger playfully at the boots still reposing on the mat outside the door of Miss Nancy's opposite neighbor.

"What a lazy man to be sleeping so late!" she said, and brought a waft of fresh life into Miss Nancy's dark room, which she professed to like much better than her own.

Miss Nancy's first impulse of pleasure was speedily tempered with doubt. Blanche had come alone, and without asking permission.

"I am an American girl," said the visitor, perching herself on the high window-ledge. "The London world must get used to me, and realize that I am no worse than my neighbors."

"But your mother," demurred Miss Nancy, taking the two little gloved hands in her own.

"She would not object," said Blanche, quickly. "Besides, you know the code of Young America is, 'Parents, obey your children.' Papa—I mean all of us, were so grateful to you for finding Tommy."

Miss Nancy's eyes filled with sudden tears.

"My pretty bird!" was all the response

she could make. She would not complain to a child of a mother's conduct.

Blanche regarded her wistfully, thoughtfully for a time, swinging one foot on that high perch in the window. Such radiance as Mulcher's Hotel could gather from the day was showered like gold-dust on her waving hair, smooth, rounded cheek, and revealed something in changeful eyes which the elder lady could not fathom.

"Show me Howard Denby's book," she coaxed, with a little flickering blush deepening the rose tints of her winning face.

How she pounced upon the treasure, and held it tightly clasped in both hands afterward! Ah me! had feminine curiosity any thing to do with this untimely visit?

"The most extraordinary young man!" she pouted. "Why, he left us with scarcely a word; even the Cockses do not know what has become of him. Rockwell has promised to find him for you, however. He held me in the ropes that fearful night, when I should have died alone."

The girl's face had paled with sudden emotion; her eyes dilated as she leaned toward Miss Nancy.

"He went away without giving even papa the opportunity of expressing our gratitude."

"Expressions of gratitude may be irksome to him," said Miss Nancy. "They often are to brave men."

"He should not evade us," flashed Blanche. "It is wrong, mean, detestably proud. Miss Hawse, he shall not, either."

She drew from her bag a tiny packet, sealed, and tied with a dainty silk cord.

"When you restore his pocket-book, please give him this from me, Blanche Pierman."

"He may misunderstand you," doubted sober middle age, accepting the packet.

"Let him, if he dares! Give it to him with your own hands, dear Miss Hawse. Oh, when we all come to die, I think we shall see again the black waters, the white veil of fog, and our graves beyond!"

Her voice faltered with sobs; she burst into tears. Miss Nancy was also strongly moved: before she could prepare to comfort her guest, however, Blanche had brushed away the tears from her long eyelashes, and was smiling tremulously.

"I will come to you every morning. That shall be our secret," she whispered, giving Miss Nancy a farewell kiss.

"No, my dear, you must never come again without your mother's leave," said the latter, firmly.

"*Eh bien*, then you are glad to be rid of me."

"Oh, Blanche, how can you—"

But Blanche was gone, with a mocking bow to the boots of the opposite door—gone with a rustle of silken train and the jingle of silver ornaments at her belt, her airy laughter floating back to the ear of the owner of the boots like the music of another sphere.

He was seated on the side of his bed, holding his head between his hands in an attitude of dejection, if not despair.

"As well beat out life against rocks as to try to make these people believe," he cried aloud, and just then the rippling laughter of Blanche Pierman reached him.

With a flush of glad recognition, and a responsive smile, he sprung up and approached the door. Had he opened it, he would have stood face to face with Miss Nancy on the landing. Instead, the smile faded to an expression of preoccupied care, his hand dropped, and he turned to a table covered with papers. The boots remained outside.

"A most dissipated man, young or old, I fear," sighed Miss Nancy, regarding them pensively. "It is twelve o'clock—'yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that traveleth, and thy want as an armed man.'"

Thus did Miss Nancy judge her neighbor as correctly as human wisdom, gathering aside its own garments, usually balances good and evil in others.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. VIDAL'S MOTHER-IN-LAW.

"WHAT is the use of it all?" mused Mrs. Sharpe, sniffing at the camphor bottle gloomily. "I should like an honest American breakfast, for one thing: not your sloppy tea, heavy bread, and pale bacon. Ugh!"

"Consider the interest England possesses for us, though, as the home of our forefathers; and, then, it is such a lovely country of parks, lawns, and shrubbery when the sun does shine," Miss Nancy ventured to reply, for her companion's mood was an unpromising one.

"Oh, I have heard all that before—a dozen times at least," responded Mrs. Sharpe, quite rudely, in the excess of her irritability. "The sun never *does* shine."

"This is an exceptional year," urged Miss Nancy, cheerfully.

"Does it make the circumstance of tourists finding the scenes they wish to visit two feet under water any the pleasanter to term the calamity 'late heavy floods?' Fiddle-dee-dee! The natives should have been made web-footed, like the ducks, to suit their climate. Only look at that woman paddling along over yonder. What boots!"

Miss Nancy sighed inaudibly, and glanced out of the window. The prospect was not encouraging, certainly, of dingy houses on whose walls the soot of years had settled, of muddy crossing, of dull sky, and a sheet

of descending rain having that peculiar yellow tinge which seems to stain. Within, the prospect was scarcely less dreary—of an angular sitting-room, with the aspect of having been wedged into a vacant space of the hotel, a smoky fire burning on the hearth, and languishing in the chilly July morning; some glass candelabra dangling on the chimney-piece, and the Princess of Wales smiling down from the sombre heights above, enlivening the place with her amiability and beauty. Then there sat Mrs. Sharpe, the very adjustment of her cap-ribbons, the very wrinkle about her rather long nose betokening a settled intention to bowl down any feeble little ten-pin of an argument Miss Nancy might set up on this inauspicious day. The latter tapped the window-pane, and glanced askance at Mr. Vidal's mother-in-law, wishing that the mantle of companionship had not descended quite so heavily on her own shoulders. She was a voluntary victim, to be sure. In avoiding Scylla, the Piermans, had she become already ingulfed in a Charybdis, Mrs. Sharpe? What more natural than that bride and bridegroom should flit over to Paris, leaving Mrs. Sharpe, a lady of some wealth and many whims, in the care of an old maid? For what purpose are old maids placed in the world, except to be useful to their happy juniors?

Suddenly Mrs. Sharpe exclaimed,

"I am glad he is to be buried at last! I am quite tired of staring at the hatchment opposite, I am sure."

"He is the last Lord Bobbin," said Miss Nancy, meditatively.

"He must be glad to die, if his whole life has been spent in that house, with nothing but rain and mud outside," said Mrs. Sharpe, in her most sombre tone.

They watched the funeral pass from the mansion where the melancholy emblem had hung on the gray-black wall, a most respectable and lugubrious train of high coaches, and hearse with nodding plumes, the very coachmen having that sable blackness of aspect which made their rosy faces appear unduly bright on such an occasion. No marvel that tender little David Copperfield smelled hot crape with horror in his sensitive childhood.

"The coachmen should have their faces blackened with cork to match, like the negro minstrels," observed Mrs. Sharpe, smiling grimly.

Why need Lord Bobbin die, and be buried on this particular morning, when Mrs. Sharpe was so low in spirit and left in Miss Nancy's care? The latter rose, and shook off the gathering gloom; she even crossed the room and laid her hand on her companion's shoulder.

"We must become accustomed to rain," she said, with assumed gayety. "Let us visit the Tower to-day."

Mrs. Sharpe looked up dubiously.

"What is the use?" she repeated. "You know that we went there early one Monday morning, when the working-people should be employed, if they ever are, and found it a free day, with the British public crowding in fifty at a time."

Miss Nancy became desperate.

"Suit yourself," she said, firmly. "I am going to the Tower, and in a hansom-cab."

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Sharpe, with sudden alacrity, and, rising briskly, she put on her bonnet without another word.

How has the American nation resisted the hansom-cab so long? Surely no race on earth is better adapted than ourselves to enjoy the break-neck pace, the sweep around corners, the spurring-ahead of other vehicles, shaving wheels by an inch, and the feet of pedestrians by a hair-breadth, of this celebrated conveyance.

Rattle, jolt, trot, trot! The exhilaration of the daring deed stirred Miss Nancy's blood even as the pace of the family horse at home made her nervous as he approached the railroad track, dragging the venerable "carryall." She glanced with a sense of superiority at passing omnibuses; she felt that she held her own with landaus, even if driven by dignified coachmen in pink top-boots. Mrs. Sharpe had a helpless appearance, like a baby in a perambulator, and gazed fixedly at the horse's tail. The hansom dashed up one thoroughfare and down another at a furious pace. A prison-van moved slowly along, followed by such dangerous atoms as find cohesion readily in public excitement. How promptly did Miss Nancy imagine the inmate to be a convict, who had already served a twenty-years' term, now arrested for petty crime, because in returning to freedom he found himself at odds with society! A bit of broken glass would aid him to suicide on re-entering his cell, perhaps.

Those human wafers, sandwiched between placards of advertisements, straggled near the curbstone, and were read by cockneys, walking backward for the purpose, entirely irrespective of the feelings of the inmate. Little boys and girls presented oyster-shells with a persuasive "Remember the grotto," which meant that the season of the delicious bivalve had commenced. At least this was a change from the dreadful mornings spent in the hotel. Miss Nancy was just congratulating herself on the happy inspiration of visiting the Tower, when they were caught in the eddy of a crowd gathered about two sailors.

"It is a riot," shrieked Mrs. Sharpe, clutching her companion.

The crowd had taken sides, with the startling rapidity peculiar to the denizens of towns in decision. The sailors pummeled a civilian; a tall, handsome soldier, the perfect type of a Sergeant Troy, looked on

scornfully at the other branch of the service; and the cab paused.

"Let me get out; we shall be murdered!" cried Mrs. Sharpe, struggling to unfasten the leather door, which confined her, like a bib.

"Pray be quiet," urged Miss Nancy, her eye fixed apprehensively on the assailants.

Men-of-war's-men, more hilarious in London than elsewhere on shore, presumably going to the train for Plymouth, prey to all land vultures, yet protected heartily by the populace as well. Such were the deadly elements gathered about the two ladies in the cab. There had been an altercation with the land vulture. In a moment the throng gathered; women took sides, impulsively hurling themselves into the fray; the human wafers, pursuing their profession harmlessly on the curb-stone, either cast away their advertising envelopes, or were flattened beneath them altogether on the pavement. Sergeant Troy, in spotless scarlet, looked on haughtily at the blundering, boisterous sailors. Little boot-blacks, in red blouses, gathered to see the fun. Elements of discord appeared in a flash of intelligence from everywhere—the magnet, a row. Miss Nancy waited in sickening fear, with suspended breath. Would there be a fight, when a knife would flash, in the heat of passion, giving a thrust never to be repaired this side of the grave? Lo! one policeman, in helmet arrayed, walked into the midst, arrested his men. The sailors dispersed; the screaming women, who had added fuel to combustibles by their fervor of rage, were gone; the soldier, with a smile, turned jauntily on his heel. The hansom started violently.

"Mercy! Whoa! The horse is running away!" exclaimed Mrs. Sharpe, endeavoring to grasp the reins above her head.

"Don't!" implored Miss Nancy. "You forget that the man is guiding the horse from behind." Always sensitive to ridicule, she became acutely aware, with cheeks deeply dyed crimson, that the occupants of a passing omnibus roof, known as the "knife-board," were laughing at Mrs. Sharpe, and that the dismembered fragments of the recent crowd were also prepared to transfer their attention from the sailors to the cab. Terrible lash of street ridicule! Miss Nancy already beheld Mr. Vidal's mother-in-law portrayed in *Punch*, with a possible likeness of herself beside her. Mrs. Sharpe was entirely unmoved by such considerations.

"Make the driver take a quiet street. How stupid you are, Miss Hawse! We shall get our necks broken in this horrid invention."

"I can not stop him yet," replied Miss Nancy, with some obstinacy.

"I will do so, then."

With energy, redoubled by anger and fright, Mrs. Sharpe poked her umbrella-point through the little trap-door in the roof just in season to come in contact with the cabby's left eye, as he stooped to inspect his fare. Perhaps that cabman took base advantage of the situation; but when he deposited the ladies at the Tower gate, the injured optic was carefully bound up in a bandana handkerchief, and his manner partook of such a mixture of the doleful and the belligerent, that Miss Nancy hastily lightened her purse in his favor, visions of police courts floating before her fancy. Afterward, the conviction smote her sharply that she had intended to give him two shillings as a balm to injured eye-sight, and had actually bestowed a golden sovereign instead.

Mrs. Sharpe protested against such folly, and kept her own purse safely in her pocket the while. Why is it that the poor, little, shabby purses come out so much more frequently in this life than the sleek, well-filled ones? The elder lady then remarked, pleasantly:

"You will never find me in one of those things again, now that I am out alive. No, not if I walk home, which I should judge would take about two days from this out-of-the-way place."

Down on the brink of river Thames, venerable walls and parapets greeted Miss Nancy. Oh, if father had been there! Entering the gates, the busy streets, teeming with modern traffic, were left behind; the century seemed left behind, save for such reminders as Victoria's imperial state crown, blazing with myriads of gems; the baptismal font of royal christenings; and the presence of Scotch Fusileers, issuing with hum of bagpipes, from the Waterloo Barracks. Undoubtedly, Miss Nancy was a sentimental tourist. The burden of Mrs. Sharpe's mood lessened as she reached this goal of many a fireside reverie at home. The traveler from Briarbush would have knelt in reverence before the Pyramids, and the squib of historian Fuller would have scarcely provoked a smile. "The Pyramids themselves, doting with age, have forgotten the names of their founders." How much more, then, her awe and solemnity in this place, familiar with American childhood, a heritage carried across seas!

The old warden, handsome, keen-eyed, and with silvery beard, in his quaint garb of king's yeoman, a tarnished diadem stamped between his shoulders, a fantastic hat ornamented with ribbon on his head, became a magician to her fancy. He waved his baton; his sing-song story was the monotonous ripple of a thin stream of falling waters scarcely heeded, yet weaving a spell.

The rain had ceased as suddenly as the temper of Mrs. Sharpe veered; summer sunshine had come on the whole city unexpectedly; bridges, palaces, squares, and monuments glittered in the unwonted radiance, as if a mist veil had been swept aside, re-

vealing only the magnificent. There was a bloom of pale turquois tints on the river's surface, seen through spaces of the Traitor's Gate; the old buildings stood half in light and half in shadow; wherever a vine might loop sprays of tender green about rugged, narrow casements, the mantle was flung. The Scotch Fusileers formed in parade, and the roll of the little drummer-boy sounded cheerily. In one angle of the soft, gray obscurity a flame of scarlet wavered along the wall; it was a sentinel at his post.

The old magician waved his wand, and the summer sunshine darkened to sorrowful, dreary winter storms; the Scotch Fusileers, the smart little drummer-boy, and the Waterloo Barracks vanished. Miss Nancy saw only the Tower Green, whereon the queen has caused turf to be sown in a merciful time, in the noonday of our civilization, which forbids such flow of human blood as followed the stroke of that executioner's axe, which was seldom idle for lack of food so many, many hundred years. A patch of green where turf can not spread oblivion, and shadowy victims flocking through the river gate from Whitehall, extending rank behind rank, culled from the great fields of life, and cast down here to endure lingering torments of hope and fear, the music of the banquet-hall changed for the clang of a death-knell, as a monarch's smile became a frown—a procession of ghosts stretching back to dim centuries, the sport of kings.

"On through that gate misnamed, through which, before,
Went Sidney, Russel, Raleigh, Cranmer, More."

How real, how familiar, the terrible story! Here beautiful Anne Boleyn commended her soul to Christ before laying her fair head on the block, in the year 1536; Lady Jane Grey, "nine days queen," stood at the narrow casement yonder, now dull and lifeless, and beheld the corpse of her young husband borne past below. The plain woman from over the sea could almost feel what the shriek of recognition must have been. Against these prison bars, Lady Arabella Stuart fluttered, went mad, and died. In the north-west corner of the inner ward stood the church of St. Peter-ad-Vincula, disfigured by restoration, yet pronounced by Macaulay one of the saddest spots on earth, where lie Catherine Howard, Anne Boleyn, Lord Rochford, Lord Seymour of Sudley under warrant of his own brother, the Protector Somerset, and impetuous Essex.

Nancy thrilled with sympathy at sight of the Towers, each a separate history, a citadel, a heart of pain and suffering, yet linked together by bastions, bridges, moat, and portcullis. Behold the Bell-tower, where Princess Elizabeth bided her time, as prisoner of Sister Mary, firmly adhering to the Reformed faith, and issuing forth on her coronation-day, prepared to use the prison to fully as good purpose as her predecessors, after those first golden years of peace; the Beauchamp Tower, scrawled with names of fading captives; the Devereux Tower, with walls eleven feet in thickness, where Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, was confined by capricious Elizabeth, who was unable to sleep after his execution; the Bowyer Tower, where George, Duke of Clarence, perished in the butt of malmsey; and the Bloody Tower, most fearful of all, where the bones of the royal children were discovered after two hundred years.

In her own mind Miss Nancy likened this reality to the tears of centuries taking form, and petrifying into saddest form of stone, Niobe fashion.

The voice of Mrs. Sharpe disturbed her meditations:

"This is a charming spot in which to learn Christian charity," observed that lady, staring hard at Miss Nancy. "I would not drink wine for lunch again, if I were you; it makes your face red, and you are unused to it."

Miss Nancy murmured a faint denial; perhaps it was better, even emanating from a temperance land, to bear the odium of a glass of wine rather than confess that the woes of certain fair queens, as recited by the magician, had moved her to tears. The Anglo-Saxon race is mortally ashamed of tears. As for Mrs. Sharpe, she was glad to see the old place; but there were drawbacks to her felicity. Her boot pinched her foot; she feared she had taken too thin a shawl for the weather; and, blessed with keen olfactory nerves, she found the company not all that could be desired. Thus they reached the White Tower, standing in the full light, coated with lime, in repair, yet the most ancient structure of all in this wonderful chain, and flanked by the four turrets which crown the citadel.

How vividly Miss Nancy recalled her companion's next remark later on that eventful day!

"We are the only well-dressed people in this common-looking crowd. Always the way. If we decide to go anywhere, all creation rushes there on the self-same day; and as for the regalia, I am sure the Koh-i-noor might as well be putty for any beauty I can discover when I am held back by at least two yards of steel bars, as if I were a thief well known to the London police."

"It is a privilege to be admitted at all," retorted Miss Nancy, with the dazzle of priceless jewels still before her eyes.

They toiled up into the great armory, ceiling emblazoned with flowers formed of glittering weapons, avenues of trophies, Scotch targets, broadswords, tilting lances, and halberds. Mrs. Sharpe panted and protested.

"More stairs? I can not go another step."

The party trooped on; Miss Nancy hesitated, and glanced back at Mrs. Sharpe.

"We can not stay here. We shall lose our way," she urged.

Just then a little old man popped up, like a manikin, and approached the tourists, bowing and rubbing his hands. There was about him that fragrance of gin peculiar to lower London, and his puckered face wore a wheedling smile.

"Yes, ladies—a chair? here's one, ladies," said the little old man, ministering to the necessities of the moment as if by magic.

"I will wait here until you return," said Mrs. Sharpe, sinking down on the chair with a sigh of satisfaction.

"But we may not return," demurred her perplexed companion.

"Oh yes, ladies; in fifteen minutes. The party is sure to come back this way," interposed the little old man, blinking with cunning, red-rimmed eyes.

Then Miss Nancy sped up the stone steps, which were dark and gloomy, leaving Mrs. Sharpe seated, with the little old man hovering near, and rubbing his hands with great apparent satisfaction at the arrangement.

Miss Nancy had never seen a warrior, the knight of chivalry and romance, in her life. A soldier, a hero? Yes. Her cousin Martha's boy, aged eighteen, shot through the heart at Gettysburg, and brought home with a smile on his lips. Now she beheld King Hal, as a royal wooer, in his wedding armor, engraved with badges of himself and Catherine of Aragon, rose and pomegranate, Ferdinand's sheaf of arrows, England's portcullis, fleur-de-lis, and red dragon on the fans of the *genouillères*.

"Oh, you wretch!" said Miss Nancy, with intense animosity, which she had transmitted, in her capacity of school-marm, to the young fry of Briarbush.

There rode the tyrant in the armor of his wedding-day, rose and pomegranate gracefully united, and at the extremity of a long apartment sat Elizabeth, in faded robes of state, piously intent on returning thanks at St. Paul's Cathedral for deliverance from the Spanish Armada. Is it mere chance that her niche, as presiding genius of the spot, is reached only through halls where Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, armed *cap-a-pie*, his device of bear and ragged staff emblazoned on his tilting armor, stands prepared to win fresh laurels at the tournament before the eyes of his admiring sovereign? Is there trace of shadow on the simpering face of the Virgin Queen that Earl Essex rides gallantly yonder in flashing gilt and steel helmet and breastplate, spurring ardently, impulsively, to his dreadful end? Are we to associate the splendor, the clemency of her reign, with any of these instruments of torture grouped before her—bilbo, thumbkin, or scavenger's daughter—and the tiny cell, dark, narrow, terrible, where Sir Walter is reputed to have slept for twelve years before his death by order of James? Ride on, Queen Bess, in faded robes of state to prayers of thanksgiving that Spain's mighty armament was shattered by friendly ocean.

The glitter of weapons, where the light smote sparks of dazzling scintillations from burnished surfaces, iron, brass, and gold, almost bewildered Miss Nancy. She paused to touch the stone wall of Sir Walter's cell pityingly, tenderly, now that the critical eye of Mrs. Sharpe was no longer fixed on her. Out of the darkness rose the brilliant form of the cavalier, crowned by youth, spreading his cloak for the feet of the haughty queen; then the enthusiastic explorer, gazing toward sunset, lured by fabled treasures, a prince among men, who attracted all eyes as he paced within these prison walls; then the grave philosopher, tracing his own history of the world, and demanding of nature her secrets in science, even as he had always demanded generous homage of his fellow-creatures.

Suddenly a chill crept over Miss Nancy. What had happened? The warden and magician, followed by the gaping crowd, had turned another way. Mrs. Sharpe would be left behind. Miss Nancy realized, all too late, that she should have questioned the magician before, only she disliked to interrupt his story. Must her sins be wholly confessed? The gorgeous throng of knights and warriors had banished from her mind Mr. Vidal's mother-in-law. Why had the little old man told such a fib?

A youth, attired in gray tweed, had shown a troublesome interest in whatever Miss Nancy found interesting for some time past, and just when she would have claimed information of him as to the route chosen by the party, he had departed with the rest. She went to the second stone stairway, which wound up and up into obscurity, and attempted to call: the warden's voice sounded like the murmur of a sea-shell, and drowned all inquiries effectually. It was strange to be alone among so many people. She must return for Mrs. Sharpe, and either lead her out by the way they had entered, or bring her back in the hope of overtaking the party. In her ingratitude, Miss Nancy wished that she had come alone. Groping down the giddy steps, solitude began to make her nervous; it was like the downward impulse of dreams when the dreamer is ever about to fall from heights to unseen depths. Her heart beat faster as she fancied that she saw faces, the hideous features of the assassins for which the place had once been famous, lurking in corners where the darkness gathered in denser blackness. She laughed uneasily, then shivered when she thought of Raleigh's cell.

She was unprepared for the shock awaiting her below.

Mrs. Sharpe, indeed, occupied the chair in the armory, but her own cashmere scarf was tied across her mouth, and her hands were knotted together firmly in her lap, with her own pocket-handkerchief. She was awfully still.

At this appalling spectacle Miss Nancy's limbs failed her. Afterward a misty recollection came back to her of sitting down on the lowest step of the stairway: a cold dew started on her forehead. Good Heavens! had Mr. Vidal's mother-in-law been strangled or murdered? What had become of the little old man? Saving herself from fainting with an effort, Miss Nancy finally gasped,

"Mrs. Sharpe—ma'am—are you much hurt?"

The bound hands moved; there was a gurgle behind the scarf, which betokened, to Miss Nancy's inexpressible relief, that life was not extinct. The armory was spinning around before the horrified spectator's eyes. Still she managed to release the poor head, when the captive drew a long breath, and exclaimed:

"This is all your fault! You brought me here to be robbed and murdered. He dared me to move and scream—the wretch! Hush! Let us run for our lives, and I will tell you all afterward."

Out in the court the sun was still shining, the Scotch Fusileers forming to hum of bagpipe, the magician just emerging from another building.

Mrs. Sharpe, left alone, and unsuspicious of harm, had drawn forth her fan and prepared to enjoy her rest, when the little old man had approached her chair behind, and demanded a sixpence in a menacing tone, his fingers extended like claws. Mrs. Sharpe had acceded to this reasonable demand, and was fumbling for her purse, when her own scarf was slipped over her mouth, stifling possible cries, the little old man assumed the gigantic proportions of a highwayman in a trice, her pocket was rifled, her watch and chain wrenched off, while frightful threats were breathed in her ear if she attempted to resist.

Thus Miss Nancy found her, and was blamed for the catastrophe in her first breath of freedom. Nor was this all. Painful blushes were called to Miss Nancy's cheek by the conspicuous conduct of her companion when she found herself outside, and with an audience. She had been robbed, and barely escaped murder in the armory. That handsome magician, the warden, possibly piqued by Mrs. Sharpe's lack of interest in his recitations, was skeptical; incredulity was plainly stamped on every face; the young man in gray tweed was no longer visible; and Miss Nancy thought doubts were entertained, either as regarded the sanity of Mr. Vidal's mother-in-law or her possible sobriety, as, with violent gesture, she denounced the Tower and every body present. The little old man had evidently been seen by none, and was believed to be the myth of hysterical feminine brains. Would Mrs. Sharpe make a charge, to recover her watch? No, she would not. She was only a poor foreigner, and could not expect to receive justice. With this parting shot at the British Government in general, and still panting like a war-horse, Mrs. Sharpe allowed herself to be conducted to a four-wheeled cab.

Poor Miss Nancy, much flurried by these disasters, could still glance back at the tiny patch of green made to bloom by the good Queen Victoria, and then at the river flowing beyond that terrible gate where the archbishop's ghost once hovered before the vision of affrighted London, forbidding the growth of wharf and wall. Forgotten the tilts and tournaments; the coronation days; Stephen's court, held in 1140; the residence of Henry III. and Edward I. here; the long three hundred years when all kings of England issued forth from this spot to be crowned; and only this low, dark tunnel is seen, with the flight of steps, the small postern, the draw-bridge, where nobles, women, wits, and philosophers passed to their doom.

Still satirical, the magician with his silvery beard, bright eyes, and quaint garb observed,

"You have no such old buildings in America."

"No, thank God," said Miss Nancy, solemnly, and entirely without a sense of humor in the remembrance of Artemus Ward.

Then she came forth into the streets once more, and the drowsy music of the bagpipes lessened, to her startled fancy, until merged in the wail of human voices coming fitfully on the blast.

"Poor Anne Boleyn! I am glad that Elizabeth, her daughter, did reign, after all. It was a rude age, and religion required a stanch bulwark," said Miss Nancy, when they were seated in the cab.

"You are so romantic, my dear," replied Mrs. Sharpe. "How these rattling windows set one's teeth on edge! And this cab has a most peculiar, musty odor. Oh, my poor nose, how are you insulted at every turn!"

"I do not observe any thing amiss," said Miss Nancy, abstractedly. She was growing pale as her fingers sought the depths of her pocket.

Mrs. Sharpe was very proud of her nose; not so much as a gift of nature in ornament, as an indication of high birth. She fixed a dreadful look on her companion, and said, with melodramatic impressiveness,

"The smell is small-pox, or a corpse. They carry dead people in these cabs sometimes, and no one can fathom the crime of a great city."

"How horrible!" shuddered Miss Nancy, and turned her pocket inside out, with a gesture of despair. Her purse was gone.

Mrs. Sharpe chuckled, for the first time that day, with the glee of a raven.

"How did it happen?" she cried, triumphantly. "I should have imagined that *you* might have kept your pocket safe."

"There was a young man in gray tweed," faltered Miss Nancy, and was forced to borrow a shilling of the hotel porter.

Mrs. Sharpe's sitting-room presented a charming picture: a young man and girl stood on the hearth-rug in the attitude of the Huguenot Lovers. Mr. Vidal and his bride had returned from Paris. The mother-in-law sunk down on the sofa, and began to cry.

Miss Nancy went to remove her bonnet, and found a bit of pasteboard, meaning so much or so little, on her table. Dr. Pierman had called on her, previous to his departure for the Continent. It was better to have avoided a painful interview, she reasoned soberly; and yet she wished that she could have seen him, if only for a moment. How petty the small misunderstandings and disagreements of life actually were. Stay; there was a line in pencil on the back of the card:

"Mr. Howard Denby has been also stopping at Mulcher's Hotel. He left to-day for Brighton."

Miss Nancy rushed wildly to the desk, and requested to see the hotel register. In a corner of the next page to her own address was the name "H. Denby, United States." He had been sheltered by the same roof all this time. The number of his room brought him near her own chamber—49. Why, it was the opposite door on the landing, and Howard Denby was the owner of the boots! Unpardonable stupidity! The mystery concerning dead Uncle Simon was within reach of her very hand, and she had failed to grasp it.

Evidently Mrs. Sharpe told her own story to her young people, for when Miss Nancy appeared at dinner, according to invitation, she was treated with a certain indefinable and pitying forbearance. The bride even kissed her re-assuringly.

"You two shall not be left alone again in a foreign land," she said, sweetly.

Outside, the clouds lowered once more, the yellow rain descended heavily, monotonously; and opposite was the sombre dwelling which the last Lord Bobbin had quit for the grave.

CHAPTER X.

BRIGHTON BY THE SEA.

MERRY, laughter-loving Brighton, first sea-side resort in the world. Hither came Miss Nancy in search of Howard Denby, owner of the Russia-leather pocket-book which had already occasioned her so much perplexity.

"After Mulcher's Hotel, let me seek lodgings," she said.

Mulcher's bill had been fearfully and wonderfully compounded of pounds, shillings, and pence. It consisted of a long and narrow strip of blue paper, and the schoolmarm had accepted it with something more than the interest with which she would have "worked out" a problem on the blackboard for the benefit of her pupils in Briarbush Academy, the result and answer being, in this case, she must pay. Iced water and ice-cream forsooth, Miss Nancy! One shilling and sixpence for each sip of your favorite beverage, my dear lady, and four shillings an ice, with the addition of three stale biscuits. Then the bill. Just when she had decided, with some dismay, that she read the sum total at the bottom of the page, the sprightly brunette at the desk had called her attention to the top of another column, and the sum total, increasing in progress after the manner of a snow-ball, pursued down this second alarming row of figures, was finally arrested in the middle of the next line.

"Service, candles, hire of room," murmured Miss Nancy, and snapped her purse resolutely in the face of the cynical waiter, who was hovering hopefully near.

How are we to balance Mulcher's Hotel, dingy, dismal, and extortionate, against fixed prices in certain American hotels which are lamented over as fabulous by the British traveling public?

Accordingly, at Brighton, avoiding the spacious Grande, and the stately Bedford, which resembles so much a member of the House of Commons in massive, solemn aspect of respectability, Miss Nancy became a lodger. Behold her tasting the first delights of a system worthy of transplantation to boarding America, in a perfected economy of living. Her landlady was affable, and speedily enlisted her sympathy as a gentlewoman reduced by misfortune. A rosy little maid served her, with unobtrusive and quiet demeanor. Persuasive venders thrust every imaginable delicacy in her window—turbots and soles, not fresh from the sea, but from the London market instead, and fruit in tempting variety. The green-grocer and Italian warehouse-man spread wily nets for Miss Nancy, baited with such exquisite cleanliness as puts to the blush the most energetic attempts at neatness in American shop-keepers. Rolls of fresh golden butter; bacon, delicately veined pink-and-white, firm as marble; molds of lard, disdaining relationship with such degenerate fat as we know; most luscious jams, piquant sauces of world-renowned Crosse & Blackwell; cheese of Cheddar, in portions nicely adjust-

ed to the purse of the purchaser; French crystallized fruits, in shilling boxes, in place of our dollar bonbons. Gazing at these shops from a purely artistic point of view, the vision of Mrs. Bridget Maloney rose before Miss Nancy, provoking an involuntary smile. Mrs. Maloney, hale, buxom, cheerful, with six little Maloneys at her heels, and Patrick, "her man," dozing off last night's drunken stupor of the dram-shop, had long reigned chief washer-woman of Briarbush. A drop of tea and a bit of bread were never refused by Mrs. Maloney, as her rosy face loomed through the steam of the wash-tub.

"Butter, is it?" she would inquire. "No, thin, thank ye kindly, mum; shure, I never tasted *that* but oncet in Ameriky, and that'll do the likes of me, anyhow." This sarcasm was highly appreciated by all Briarbush, save Mr. Abijah Hoppin, who kept the village store.

Our traveler could scarcely resist the subtle flattery of the wine-merchant, or the showers of letters brought by the postman, calling her attention by name, with deferential civility to all branches of industry on earth, from mantua-makers and Indian outfitters to chiropodists.

Where was Howard Denby? In vain she read lists of hotel arrivals, and a doubt began to assail her if he had not come and gone on the briefest holiday. She wrote to Rockwell Cocks, who was still in London, to inform her of Mr. Denby's movements.

"I will find him if he is in England, and learn the truth about Uncle Simon. Poor fellow! he may have already missed his memoranda, too," she resolved.

Never was apparently easy and matter-of-fact pursuit more baffling. A degree of fatalism succeeded her first energetic self-confidence. She would drift toward him inevitably on this current of sparkling life, sooner or later.

She looked for him in the mornings when the day opened fresh and clear, the parted clouds piling soft masses of white vapor in the south. The old bath-woman, in blue flannel, with picturesque red kerchief crossed over her breast, and black cap on her head, greeted Miss Nancy. She swung a toy wooden shovel in her hand; there was a smile of wheedling propitiation on her weather-bronzed, puckered old face, with bulbous nose battered on the tip, as if from frequent contact with the shingle.

"'Ave a barth this fine morning, lady? Yes, my dear, ninepence, only ninepence, and them white wagons. Thank'ee, lady."

A sweet, piercing call, the quaint note of generations of venders, proceeded from the mouth of a freckled, bare-footed little boy, who carried bundles of blooming lavender, most fragrant of wholesome herbs, suggestive of linen-presses and thrifty housewives; marking also the waning days of the long twilight.

"Oh, buy my sweet, blooming la-a-vender." So the fresh, young voice floated on from the wide expanse of esplanade up many a steep and narrow street.

Next came the shrill pipe of Punch, a boy thumping a drum, hopeful of spectators, and the little dog Toby, with the grave aspect of a professional, trotting soberly along beside the miniature theatre. Business proving dull, Punch passed on.

Goats of a hackney-coach order eat their dinners from a bag, with a business-like manner, while harnessed to baby barouches, awaiting customers; goats so curbed and broken by civilization that they seem to have lost their power of "butting," primeval right and inheritance of the race. Donkeys belonging to the caste of watering-place appointments blinked at Miss Nancy out of funny little eyes, without a hope of rising in the world. The Bath chair, subject of many a caricature, dragged portly dowagers and invalids, swathed like mummies, over the strand. How could this admirable mode of placid locomotion be introduced into America? Where is the Hibernian who would tamely spend his day wheeling the Bath chair instead of fighting his way valiantly upward in the scale of being by means of politics and trades-unions? Where is the American invalid who would thus submit to trundling along, unless a locomotive, or a system of balloons, were attached to accelerate speed?

Howard Denby was not to be found in that damp paradise, the Aquarium, where Miss Nancy followed him, and mimic cascades dripped above her head amidst chilly bowers of rock-work. In crystal depths of artificial homes dwelt strangers from the "dim water-world," transported against their will, slaves to science and food for idle amusement. Poor little sea-horses twined in graceful evolutions about aquatic plants; liliputian turtles toiled up rocks leading nowhere; "horse-shoes," with the aspect of wearing somebody else's hat for a shell, too large for them, tumbled about clumsily; elderly lobsters lurked in holes, much badgered by the publicity of life; brisk, active little crabs, Frenchmen among the crustacea, and jaunty cray-fish, spoiled by flattery, standing on the tips of their claws, in affected attitudes, before the glass sides of tanks; while my lord sturgeon swam in calm majesty among groves of sea-weed.

Once Miss Nancy fancied she had overtaken Howard Denby. A young man stood gazing intently at the octopus. Could it be he? Miss Nancy paused. No; he was a stranger, evidently rehearsing some of the horrors of Victor Hugo's "Toilers of the Sea." The cuttle-fish, a lump of jelly adhering to the side, began to writhe in dull

anger at the teasing, steady gaze of the young man; long tentacles unfolded from the central disk of the body, waved, groped abroad for prey, and the large, dim eyes glared back defiance. Miss Nancy turned away, sickened and giddy. The rock-work dripped above her head; the cold atmosphere was impregnated with faint sea-odors; flashing forms darted through the water, like shuttles of silver, coming and going, with wearying repetition. She was glad to escape from it all.

Howard Denby was not in the Royal Pavilion of George IV., that airy bubble of a fantastic builder, which rises in many a dome and porch amidst lawn and flower parterres. Shall it be told that Miss Nancy utterly forgot him in this temple of pleasure, colored with gorgeous Eastern hues—red, green, and gold—dragons poising crystal pendants, and serpents of bronze coiling in burnished folds to support rich cornices? The lanterns still swung from gilded chains, and Chinese gods gazed down from stainéd windows on trefoil, bamboo columns, and strings of bells—all belonging to a vanished dream of extravagance, to a monarch of memory more fragile than his ivory couches, satin-draped statues, and porcelain pagodas.

Miss Nancy searched for Howard Denby at noonday, where the Esplanade and King's Road extended for miles in a white line, the sea on one side, blue, sparkling, and striped with purple shadows by passing clouds, spanned by the two piers wearing a perpetual holiday aspect of flags; on the other, rows of fine houses, cream-tinted, like the perspective of a drop-curtain, broken by squares, terraces, and crescents. Farther on succeeded a wavy outline of downs, with here and there a bleak farm-house surrounded by thatched outbuildings; and beyond the road, a rampart of nodding grasses, flecked with wild flowers, forming a margin for a stretch of dazzling waters far as eye could reach, with chalk cliffs sharply outlined in advance.

Again Miss Nancy forgot her mission in delighted contemplation of the scene before her. Rottingdean nestled in the hollow, out of reach of searching winds. Most quaint of little hamlets, narrow lanes, marked by high stone walls, drowsy and quiet, sweet with flowers, the verdure of hedges, the mantles of ivy and holly clinging about gray stones! A main thoroughfare of shops and dwellings, with The Plow Tavern on one corner, was framed by the sea at one end like an azure gate. The place was a series of pictures to Miss Nancy, like the English water-colors which occasionally find their way to America. A cottage, with roof of mellow russet tints, and tufts of green moss springing above walls stained by many storms, afforded her a glimpse of an interior, where an old woman stooped over a chest of drawers, the light tinging her white cap and the brass knobs of the antique piece of furniture. A gray donkey stood before a blacksmith's forge, the ruddy glow from the fire streaming across his flanks. A child's golden head appeared at a small window, amidst the scarlet bloom of geraniums.

"This all-pervading love of flowers in the English is a most beautiful characteristic," thought Miss Nancy. "Pots hang on narrow ledges between dreary houses, rest on garret window-sills, stand in areas—anywhere, so that they may put forth glossy leaves and rich blossoms."

Peaceful beauty of English country church, surrounded by graves, ivy climbing to the roof, and a white rose swaying over the entrance-door. Here the church was very old, and showed, despite restoration, unmistakable age in curious heads above the doors, in crumbling wood-work, in a massive tower, with narrow apertures of windows in walls of great strength, and a clock in the turret, surmounted by a rusty weather-vane. The clock glittered in the sun; below was carved the warning, "Watch, for ye know not the hour." Years had rolled around scarcely unheeded; for here were educated by the vicar, Dr. Hooker, the Duke of Wellington, Archbishop Manning, and Lord Lytton. Years had rolled around, while the clock-hand pointed to the hour the French landed in 1377, carrying away as prisoners the abbot and two monks, beneath the very shadow of this church tower, before repulsed by a valiant little Lewes army.

Now Miss Nancy's charioteer had taken her under his especial protection as a tourist, with a view to possible additional remuneration. He was a burly man, with bushy beard, nose of copper hue, and certain nautical characteristics in dress. Pointing to a mansion with his whip, he claimed her horrified attention by a blood-curdling description of the owner. There had dwelt a gentlewoman who tortured cats, and was, in consequence of extending the amusement to several hundreds of the feline species, serving out a sentence at hard labor.

"Cats!" exclaimed Miss Nancy. "I have heard of cat legacies, and cat hospitals founded by peculiar ladies."

"Starved 'em, mum; put 'em in cupboards, hung 'em like rabbits. You must 'ave 'eard of her in h'America," urged the cabman; but Miss Nancy's memory failed her, despite these promptings, in the list of lunacy and crime, and Brighton's local pride was hurt.

A line of glittering cliffs, the expanding sea visible once more, the rise of downs, and the church-tower had vanished beyond the hill, where an ancient windmill stood out against the sky above the sheltered hamlet.

Noonday again came, without sunshine,

the sea of pallid silver merging to a gray horizon-line. Fog may become thin, as if refined by the unseen sun to a transparent veil of mist, curling in plumes of fleecy vapor along the road, clinging in gossamer shreds to the blossoming hedges, beautifying by this mystery all that might prove unsightly in a little fishing village. Miss Nancy thus beheld Shoreham. Like fragmentary glimpses of dreams, black masts and ropes stood out, as if against a spun-glass background, with glimpses of river and sea beyond, unreal as a mirage; a light-house loomed forth from soft obscurity; on the brink of lapsing waves an old church was discernible, whence proceeded the chanting of a choir, the voice of the edifice, sweet and low. Oh for pencil and color-box! Oh for the power to arrest these fleeting lights and shades, treasures to feed the eye as well as the memory! All Miss Nancy's nature uttered the very pain of protest at her inability to reproduce that which her soul vividly recognized. If she could but trace these gables, chimneys, and roofs, rich red, mellow ochre, deep brown, or the delicate tiny flowers, pale blue and pink, starring the moss patches on the sloping eaves, fairy bells vibrating to every tremulous breeze. The road wound on through the fog. Here a group of cloister arches, bricks time-blackened to deepest shadows, was sheltered by venerable trees that spread domes of emerald-green foliage above. There "The Mariner's Arms" invited custom, with swinging sign-board, ruddy red face, twinkling with many small windows, and hostler lounging before the door, chewing the straw of leisure.

"I shall never find Howard Denby here," said Miss Nancy, with a half-guilty sense that her own enjoyment was purchased at the expense of lost time.

The rapid trot of hoofs smote on her ear, then a horse and rider appeared on the now darkening road.

"A phantom horseman," laughed our traveler; and just then the rider turned his head. Howard Denby glanced at her carriage and vanished, like the dissolving views of shipyards, cottages, and trees now folded in the fog-mantled distance. She had seen and lost him again. Miss Nancy could have cried with vexation. Before she could open her lips he had disappeared.

Twilight rested on the face of the waters; a boat with white sail still spread, and a star of light in the bow, rose and fell on gentle surges, that seemed the pulsing hopes of a great, central heart.

In the night a storm came. The fierce south-west wind changed the tranquil blue sea to broken masses of green billows, and swept over the downs as if burdened with the death-cries of the drowned of centuries. Miss Nancy, peering from her window at dawn, fancied a phantom fleet, the ghost of shipwrecks tossing again among elements which proved their doom. What a fleet, even from the Spanish Armada to the *Schiller!* She closed her ears with both hands, to exclude the wailing wind, which brought back the rocking of the *Acis* on the sands, the woman clinging to her knees, the small gray form of the millionaire drifting past below.

"Spare me that ordeal again, oh God!" prayed Miss Nancy, burying her head in the pillow to exclude sight and sound.

The wind meant loneliness, isolation, solemnity akin to melancholy, as if the earth had hidden its face, and only the presence of the Infinite pervaded the storm.

Lewes Castle lay basking in afternoon sunshine. A lady passed beneath the Norman arch, the inner Saxon arch, and climbed the moss-grown steps leading to the battlements and towers above. The lady was Miss Nancy, and the critical eye of Mrs. Sharpe not being fixed upon her, emotion had free scope at beholding this relic of a thousand years with the July sky above it, and a wealth of green foliage billowing up to the ancient walls, screening each little narrow window with a veil of ivy, and climbing the very parapets, where stone copings made of the embrasures separate pictures of the landscape, each more lovely than the last. The path from the barbican up to the citadel was steep, and fortified at every curve, so that an enemy's advance might be disputed, inch by inch, in the wary old days of Conqueror William, when a man's house was indeed his castle.

The keep was half in golden sunshine, and half in deepest shadow of massive, stately wall — the invincible courage of the past, rough and inflexible, supporting the living tendrils of the present in blooming vines. A lime-tree grew in the middle of the space, laden with sweet blossoms, and the hum of bees sounded drowsily on the midsummer air.

Miss Nancy, ascending the zigzag path, often paused to look back. Below was the red-roofed town, famous for expelling the invader long ago, now holding assizes, with my lord's footman standing before the town-hall, in fawn-colored liveries and green satin knee-breeches; while a young laborer, handcuffed, stupid, and shy, in the first step of crime, was led away by a burly policeman. Beyond was a rim of chalk cliffs, the port of New Haven, with a thread of smoke rising from the funnel of an outgoing steamer; the sweep of downs, and windmills in silhouette against the horizon, like grotesque insects. The atmosphere was misty with sudden heat; fields of ripened golden grain were all aflame with scarlet poppies, globes of fire among the stems; and flocks of starlings hovered over the sheep, a cloud of quiver-

ing silver. Never was more lovely prospect seen! The soft outline of downs melted to opal clouds; the grain waved, a sea of gold, variegated with the poppies, as if Flora had sown them broadcast; trees met in dusky arches over the white road; and far away Brighton rested beside the rose-tinted waves, the rough winds calmed to caressing zephyrs.

Down in the richest, most sheltered meadow were ruins of a priory, dismantled halls roofed only by the heavens, fragments of chapel, and a skeleton stairway winding up within a skeleton tower. Pretty South-Down sheep fed on close turf, small heads with soft curves of woolly necks and backs, and dainty mouths nibbling eagerly. Muttonhood does not elsewhere possess the beauty here found grouped beneath trees and hedges.

Gone to their rest are the Cluny monks, bereft of even shadow of authority by iconoclastic Oliver Cromwell; and the sheep feed contentedly among the ruins. Oh, the years, and the leaves of the great book of life turned, silently turning now!

The bell of the little gate tinkled, and a wrinkled old woman, with a cheery smile, admitted Miss Nancy to the castle keep for a sixpence fee. The lime-tree, powdered with blossoms, stood in the sun, and the bees hummed about it their monotonous music. An old pensioner who dwelt up in this nest, after knocking about the world, was polishing a telescope before passing it to a gentleman. A large cannon, moss-grown to the semblance of a log, lay in shadow; a broken canoe, of rude design, was propped against a buttress; two stone figures, mutilated and worn, leaned together, staring blankly from cavernous eyes, the work of primitive sculptors, long before that death-warrant of Charles I. in the chamber above was signed.

Miss Nancy scarcely perceived these details. She ignored the old pensioner's civil greeting, the chirping remarks of the wrinkled wife, as she ran forward, and grasped the gentleman's arm.

"Have I found you at last?" she cried, with a little gasp of surprise and excitement.

He quickly lowered the telescope, and turned toward her. The next moment Howard Denby was returning her greeting with a less degree of cordiality, certainly, than her own impulsive warmth, even with a shade of constraint in his demeanor.

"You were searching for me, Miss Hawse?" he inquired, formally.

"I have done little else these two weeks," explained Miss Nancy, rapidly. "You were stopping also at Mulcher's Hotel?"

"Yes." The young man reddened with embarrassment. Evidently he would not have sought Miss Nancy's society.

"How you must have missed it. But I shall claim a reward, rest assured."

Thus speaking, Miss Nancy drew forth the pocket-book, which she carried with her.

Howard Denby received it wonderingly, and turned it over in his hand.

"This does not belong to me," he said, with a puzzled look.

"Does not belong to you? Oh, what have I lost by this delay! I thought that I recognized it as your own," cried Miss Nancy, discouraged.

"My pocket-book is almost precisely like this one. Humph! 'H. D.' on the silver plate, too! A curious coincidence, we must admit; yet mine is safe in its place at this very moment." The young man produced his book, and the two seemed identical in Russia-leather sides and silver clasps, only his own was worn a trifle shabby by the friction of longer use.

"'H. D.' stands for Howard Denby," said Miss Nancy, unaccountably depressed by the disappointment.

More was involved in the discovery than Howard Denby's restored proprietorship. That mention of Uncle Simon's name haunted and perplexed her, while she was farther than ever from discovery.

"Yes," he replied, smiling, and held up the plate of his book as well. "There are not two Howard Denbys in the world, however, let us hope," he added, in a tone of bitterness.

"I have lost so much time in following you," murmured Miss Nancy, after some further explanations had been made.

"Advertise the book in England and America," suggested Howard Denby.

That evening the rosy little maid served a guest at Miss Nancy's table. The repast was simple, the participants adhering to that astonishing preference for cold water as a beverage characteristic of the race, and varied only, in the guest's case, by a glass of stout. Moreover, the meal lasted one hour, when the two drew their chairs to the window, ornamented with a stand of flowers, and Mr. Denby was permitted the solace of a cigar by his hostess. Miss Nancy was in a more cheerful mood than she had been for many a day. Perhaps to receive a guest at her own table brought back a glow of the hospitality which had characterized the old red homestead in the minister's time. The young man's shy and proud reticence may have been already thawing in the warmth of her ready sympathy. At all events, they were beginning to understand each other, seated there in the darkening room, with the clustering leaves of the plants forming a screen before the window-pane. A little park was visible beyond, where children still romped, like daisies scattered over the grass, and the crescent of a new moon hung above the sea in depths of clear blue sky. The park was ornamented with flower-beds, which made Miss Nancy quite frantic with envy, and inspired a desire to imitate the perfection of horticulture in Briarbush on a

humble scale. How to picture grandmother's amazement, or the raptures of the doctor's wife, proud of the verbenas and dahlias of her front yard, could they once behold these wheels of amber and crimson starring the turf, the curves and sweeping lines of blue and purple blossoms, as if butterflies hovered and alighted on still outspread wings?

Music spoke to them from the square, rising and falling on the ear, the one intelligible voice of the universe, a language uttered to the soul, and needing no translation. Meyerbeer, Rossini, Wagner, struck the keynote in a foreign land, and, with a rush of old associations, the young man and middle-aged woman were at home once more.

Howard Denby was talking at last! Miss Nancy heard about the M'Guires, death in the cold city streets, failure and discouragement, all told in the querulous, unconsciously irritable tone of one who felt himself born with a grievance, the very sport of fate. There was a sharp line between the eyebrows of the fair, handsome face opposite, which she had not observed on shipboard, and the blue eyes had become restless and haggard in expression.

"The misfortunes of youth may tinge our later years," observed Miss Nancy, after a pause. "You are most fortunately placed in the world."

Howard Denby tossed away his cigar impatiently; the sharp line between his brows deepened to a frown as he answered:

"I may strive until I am gray and old, and just when I am about to grasp success another will step in before me. It is my luck!"

"If I were a man with a sound brain and two hands for work, I would ask nothing of luck," retorted Miss Nancy, with spirit. "Look at the innumerable examples of self-help in men of all ranks and classes in our century, if no further back. I should choose my aim with a reasonable prospect of practical success, and then I should adhere to it until all was achieved."

"For life?" queried her visitor, moodily. "What if precious months and years were required for trifles which might be finished in weeks?"

"Patience," advised Miss Nancy, a trifle startled by the weight of her own words. "The best work takes years to accomplish; sometimes more than one life."

How tame such advice sounded! Howard Denby was not even listening.

In the opposite houses the English business of dining was transpiring, heavy, elaborate, and slow, with glimmer of gas above closed shutter and the beauty of the evening wasting unheeded. The English esteem dining too much, and the Americans too little. Will a future generation combine robust health and nervous energy in a well-balanced whole? On the horizon a snowy cloud floated; stars came forth in liquid transparency, one by one; the moon shed a wide track of silver on the sea, which murmured, as if with myriad inarticulate voices; and along the shore rose the fair and stately town, with rows of lamps forming a necklace of golden beads, and the piers reflecting tinted lamps in the waves below. Figures flitted across the bright expanse, as if before a curtain—now a horseman, now hurrying groups, vividly distinct for a moment, then gone again. "It is like life," thought Miss Nancy. "We see a yard of ocean, bounded by a margin of houses across a square, and therefore we say, from our own stand-point, the waters which bound a universe are like our limited range of vision."

Suddenly she leaned forward, moved by an impulse beyond her own control, and laid her hand on that of her visitor.

"Tell me why you avoid your friends and the Piermans," she said, gently.

"Mrs. Cocks is kind," he returned, evasively. "I have no claim of acquaintance on the Piermans."

"No claim," she repeated, in a reproachful tone. "You saved Blanche, and you saved me on that fearful night. Women do not forget such obligations as easily as you imagine. Blanche requested me to give you this."

Howard Denby received the tiny packet with a smile of incredulity and astonishment; but he did not open it.

"God bless her!" he said, softly.

Miss Nancy gazed out of the window steadily.

"If you ever wish to acknowledge the gift, I will take the letter," she said, after a pause.

"Look here, Miss Hawse," exclaimed the young man, rising. "I am not such a churlish brute as you imagine. Rockwell Cocks has crossed my life once, and he shall not again. I am determined about that—for I must then hate him." The earnestness and concentrated passion of his tone were unmistakable.

Miss Nancy also arose, and, taking his head between her hands, kissed his forehead. "My poor boy, you must tell me your schemes without reservation. I will not wait another moment, sir."

"If you wish to hear," he said, half doubtfully. "You are a good woman, Miss Hawse."

"Thank you, my dear. First let me ring for candles."

Then Miss Nancy heard his story; and the evening deepened into night unheeded while she listened. Well did the attentive friend-listener know that such a project as the one developing in Howard Denby's brain would take years to consummate, if indeed he did not prove only the guide to future genera-

tions. Nature and man must inevitably unite to baffle, thwart, and divert his effort, like the brambles catching at a passing garment. During those five years when Mrs. Cocks searched newspaper files for trace of him, alive or dead, he had quit the service of the volunteer navy, and wandered in the states of Central and South America. Youthful dreams of ambition were by no means over for the rather silent Howard, whose reserve took the form of cynicism, of which he was proud, and he discovered in the morbid reveries of loneliness a degree of superiority to his surroundings ill becoming a *protégé* of Mr. M'Guire. The dark-eyed maidens of tropical countries swinging in hammocks, cigarette between lips, in the fiery heat of noonday, acknowledged this melancholy pride as a charm, and darted soft glances at the fair-haired young man, who came among them, like a cold dawn on ice-fields. He was seeking opportunity, not the dark-eyed maidens, with the divining-rod of hope always in his hand. The century yielded many magic keys to unlock treasures of the earth, if one could find them. At last his rod bent in his grasp, and a thrill shot through his frame. He was permitted to survey his field like a bird on the wing. He found a paradise fast locked in the embrace of mighty mountains, where life was an enchanted slumber, fanned by breezes from lofty peaks, shaded by groves of clustering palms, and rich with the most prodigal gifts of nature. Silver and gold veined the mountains, yet scarcely an effort had been made to follow the traces of the Indian miners, who wrought under bondage to Spanish conquerors. Harvests remained ungathered, further than the indolent needs of the inhabitants were ministered to; while, on vast plains below, starving multitudes sought food from distant lands. Your native of the tropics starves amidst plenty.

Howard Denby decided to bridge this chasm, equalize the circulation by depleting the paradise, and consequently enriching the plains leading down to the sea, thus opening a new avenue for the commercial world. Nature was against him, and man was against him. One half of the paradise laughed and shrugged their shoulders. "Of what use to bridge the chasm?" The other half scowled at the intruder, and said, "We will travel with mules over the mountain passes, as our fathers did." The dwellers of the plains sighed and shook their heads, "Impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible," Howard Denby had returned, eying the paradise, which was placed like a crystal cup filled to the brim, on the mountain's flank above a parched desert.

Then the first bramble caught in his garment, and threatened to hold him fast. The paradise was shy of granting him privileges; even the starving plains glanced askance, and yielded reluctant assent to his claims. Why did this stranger come among them to disturb their lethargy? What was to be his gain? Precious weeks were wasted in carefully extricating his robes from these brambles; formulas on paper were at last executed; and Howard Denby started for the coast to take his discovery out into the world. Lo! he had not set foot on board a ship when the paradise was rent with internal dissension; a general was assassinated, the opposition seized the reins of government, and his claims were blown away like a feather before the blast of a hurricane. This tempest bore fruit in suspense, delay, disappointment. Howard Denby kept his temper and bided his time.

Four months later he was again permitted to depart, the opposition being established under a new presidency, and having been won over to a cold assent to his projects. Armed with such credentials, he went to the United States, and knocked at men's doors in vain. Speculators, millionaires, railroad-kings shook their heads, and thrust their hands into their pockets. If there was any thing in the scheme, somebody would have thought of it before. Howard Denby had best try the London market. The London market meant capital, powerful influence, the temptation to stake for great returns, peculiar to the age.

"And you will succeed," said Miss Nancy, soothingly.

"I have to begin again," said Howard Denby, wearily. "In the first place, I must prove the very existence of the paradise as a geographical fact, and few persons here know if Patagonia is in North or South America."

"You are tired to-night," rejoined Miss Nancy. "In the morning you will take up the burden with fresh courage."

"I have followed a great financier to Brighton in hopes of obtaining an interview," he answered, without animation.

Howard Denby went away, after writing an advertisement for the owner of the pocket-book, and Miss Nancy sat long in the succeeding silence. The young man, whose anticipations already assumed the intensity of reality, had imbued her with kindred hope and enthusiasm. For the youth who climbs, "Excelsior" on his banner, there is seldom lacking the sympathy of a woman's heart. Thus Miss Nancy thought of her guest, and before he had reached the next square he had forgotten her in the charming mystery of unfolding Blanche Pierman's package. His fingers trembled as they fumbled over the dainty silk cord: within a tiny box lay a cameo — a fairy ship tossing in white surges. This was the girl's remembrance of the night on board the *Acis*, when he had held her in his arms, precious gift of wild

winds and stormy sea. On a slip of paper attached was the motto: "*À cœur vaillant rien d'impossible.*"

Why had she chosen these words for him? Again he beheld Blanche, fair and shadowy, seated on the upper deck, in the half-mysterious darkness, a delicate creature set apart for tender homage. He kissed the little cameo—childish reminder!—and slipped it into his breast.

Moonlight brooded over Brighton by the sea, where myriads of lights twinkled above the reflecting waves. Sober, middle-aged Miss Nancy pondered in her quiet chamber, moved by hope and fear. Howard Denby stood beneath the stars, wrapped in reverie, soft, sweet, and rash, kindled by that tiny gift hidden in his breast.

At that very moment Blanche Pierman, seated amidst the brilliant throng of her Majesty's Opera, glanced at Rockwell Cocks over her bouquet, and whispered, half shyly,

"Perhaps."

And Rockwell Cocks responded,

"You darling!"

CHAPTER XI.

BOULOGNE-SUR-MER.

"DOES Miss Nancy Hawse live here?"

"Mees Hawsee? Ah, yees, madame, *mais elle est sorti.*"

"I will wait."

Madame the landlady of the Hôtel Bretagne, plump and amiable, stood in the door of her little den of an office, which formed a background for her figure, while in the court-yard full of sunshine paused her questioner, a middle-aged woman, wearing tinted glasses and a large black bonnet. In the centre of the court a dilapidated fountain splashed water in falling spray over stands of gay-tinted flowers, and through the paved stone archway a glimpse of narrow street was visible, where two old women dragged a hand-cart filled with luggage.

A group of English ladies sat near the opposite wall, one reading *The Times* through a double-eyeglass, and the rest knitting those soft wools which seem the inseparable solace of their leisure moments, more interminable than Penelope's web. A pretty *femme de chambre* crossed the sunny space with a pile of fresh linen on her arm.

"I will wait," repeated the stranger, half absently, and, following the direction of madame's fat forefinger, entered the reading-room, while the landlady contemplated her retreating figure with head held slightly on one side, and jingled the keys in her apron-pocket meditatively.

Whether her conclusions were satisfactory, or the stranger remained a mystery to her professional mind, as she had proved to many before her, madame did not reveal by outward sign, but presently returned to her ledger in the depths of the dark little office, and made some of those entries in the peculiarly spidery French handwriting which formed her chief occupation. The stranger turned her gray, set face toward the English ladies for a moment, then seated herself in the reading-room. She did not avail herself of the periodicals on the table, but, removing her blue spectacles, took from her traveling-bag an advertisement. The slip of paper read thus:

"Found on board the steamship *Acis*, wrecked June, 1875, a Russia-leather pocket-book, marked 'H. D.' Owner is earnestly solicited to address J. M. Willan, 52 St. Petersburg Place, Bayswater, London."

"What an extraordinary-looking woman," murmured one English lady, threading her needle with golden floss-silk.

"German or Scandinavian, I fancy," hazarded a second, winding a ball of sky-blue zephyr.

"No; she is a Yankee," affirmed the *Times* reader, in a tone of calm conviction. "The princess wore pink at the last garden party, my dears."

The fountain splashed among the flowers in the sunny court-yard; people came and went beneath the stone entrance arch, and time wore on.

Miss Nancy was out, taking her first glance at Boulogne-sur-mer, and in happy ignorance of the events transpiring at her hotel. The survey was a most leisurely one. Every novel object amused her. Involuntarily her gaze had followed an old soldier, jaunty and handsome, his blue coat befrogged with yellow, his lower limbs clad in scarlet inexpressibles, and a small cap resting lightly on his snowy hair, while a fierce mustache of the same hue ornamented his bronzed face. The veteran was leading a fat poodle by a string, and he ogled Miss Nancy, no doubt in gallant response to her unfeigned interest in his own astounding toilet, until she blushed and turned another way.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed our traveler in confusion, "what can he think of me, staring at him like that?"

Groups of English tourists crowded the streets; Sœurs de Charité, with meekly folded hands and glistening rosaries, glided past; sailors toiled about the *quai* and muddy basin; there was shrill clamor of foreign voices in the Marché aux Poissons, where withered old fish-wives and blooming young maidens presided over treasures of ocean, with heaps of molten silver spread before them, and their white cap-borders crimped as if in imitation of the convoluted shells they vended in nasal, sing-song tones. Picturesque, strongly colored Dames de Halle, the russet red cheek of matronly maturity, not devoid of coquetry

in dangling gold ear-rings and ready smile, in revealing white teeth, fading to the wrinkled, yellow face of age, eager for francs in lieu of sous! Lobsters, shrimps, soles were here displayed; piles of mussels; pearl-tinged and tiny frosted fish, possible relatives of the fairy white-bait across Channel, sorted by nimble brown fingers, and sold with infinite variety of rapid gesticulation; the stone roof arching high overhead, the wide entrance framing blue sky and blue water beyond.

At home, in Briarbush, the Marché aux Poissons consisted of a solitary cart, of a rusty and dilapidated description, driven around once a week, to the melody of a tin horn, by Jacob Skinner, whose soul's salvation was feared to have been imperiled by his vehement protestations of faith in the freshness of leathery clams, dubious oysters, and rigid flounders. Nobody believed Jacob Skinner, and every body always bought his delicacies in Briarbush.

"When shall we have white caps with crimped borders, gay 'kerchiefs, green and purple petticoats, which add such a charm to this unsavory business?" reflected Miss Nancy, and paused on the curbstone to witness the passage of an American circus.

With music of drum and fifes, with flutter of Stars and Stripes from piebald chargers and gilded chariots, "The Great United States Combination" passed, a graceful Gallic Liberty upheld on a glittering throne by clowns just from the Champs Élysées.

Much refreshed by this evidence of national greatness abroad, Miss Nancy had then taken a funny little basket-carriage, shaded by a striped awning, like a tent on four poles, and driven still farther away from the Hôtel Bretagne, where her presence was so much desired. The sunshine lay hot on downs, grayish-green and sandy in hue, unlike Brighton's rich emerald verdure and redundant flower bloom; a stretch of white road wound up the hill, barred with the shadows of great trees, and where a priest walked, his tall, thin form sharply outlined against the surrounding brightness, and his black robe flying behind as he moved.

The sunshine lay hot on quaint, narrow streets, rising so steeply from the *quai* in some instances as to be broken into flights of steps, blackened nets dangling from poles thrust out of upper windows. An old woman sat in the shadow of Notre Dame, with shrewd, kindly face, and a blue shawl folded over her breast, selling clusters of amber grapes and dusky purple plums; a barefooted child toiled along, bearing a milk-yoke on her slender shoulders; bands of piping school-boys, with wooden sachels slung across their backs, swarmed up the slope, guarded by a "brother."

"Oh how I should like to peep into their houses, and see how they live!" soliloquized the school-marm, as she entered the *matelot* quarter of the town.

Was it her fancy, or did the hot sunshine discover more little pictures here, rare bits of color, than elsewhere? The homes of the *matelots* rose behind the modern city like a ragged fringe of labor on the skirts of pleasure, narrow, roughly paved, and with water flowing down a central gutter; houses, two stories in height, with weather-beaten roofs, and walls colored yellow, red, and brown. No men were visible: the fleet was off on the summer fishing cruise. Here reigned the French *matelotte*, brisk, alert, industrious, and independent, with a lurking fire in her dark eye warning off tyranny—ruler on shore while her mate holds his own at sea. Admirable phase of female suffrage, this Boulogne *matelotte*, marrying in her own order, self-helpful, not neglectful of home duties, but intrenched on the very stronghold of independence—her own hearth-stone—by virtue of the aid she renders in maintaining it. Small demur could the masculine world make to such supremacy, if based on like domestic thrift. Miss Nancy simply gloried in her, and the *matelotte* nodded back to her, half smilingly, half defiantly, and never with servility, as the little basket-carriage jogged on over the rough pavement toward the cliff.

Marie leaned against the wall in the shade, her black hair tightly braided beneath the cap which formed an aureole about her oval face and heavy gold ornaments; her small feet crossed, not without art, so as to advantageously display heeled slipper and red stocking beneath the folds of lavender gown. How handsome she was in the pliant strength of her youth, as her dark eyes met those of Miss Nancy frankly, fearlessly, while her deft fingers never ceased from knitting the stocking she held!

Over yonder sat *la vieille* Babette, stooping to mend the frayed nets, her house darkened by years, herself subdued to opaque brown tints, her tongue sharpened to querulous witticisms on the faults of a rising generation, yet neatly shod, and with a well-turned ankle that had won praise in her day as well.

Celestine issued from the church door, trundling her twin babies in a tiny carriage, swathed in plaid coverings, like dolls, and sleeping peacefully. Who so proud as Celestine? She held her head high, and suffered the stranger lady in the basket-phaeton to admire the babies just christened, while Marraine Sophie walked beside her. Yes, indeed; one may look the whole world in the face when one has brought twins like these to the christening.

Poor young widow Madeleine, timid and pale, hovering near the church-door, waited for the outcoming priest, clad in black, baby wrapped in a mourning shawl. The Calvary on the hill pointed heavenward when the great waves broke over the deck, and

the image of home was revealed to the fisherman's eyes before he was ingulfed in awful darkness.

Marvelous contrast of races! Across the strip of water dwells the Englishwoman of the lower classes, attired in flaring-colored raiment, the wreck of a once fashionable bonnet on her head, and flapping crinoline, ill-fitting boots on clumsy feet; moreover, meek and crushed, like her bonnet, seldom self-assertive, and often beaten by her cruel lord.

The basket-carriage climbed up the narrow, winding streets until the Calvary was reached. There it stood on the cliff, the rude cross rising against the sky, and the kneeling saints facing seaward, as if following with prayerful look the boats sailing to distant Iceland. How suggestive of storm and darkness, of failing eyes striving to pierce the gloom of cloud and spray to signal this home beacon and emblem of salvation in one! Miss Nancy alighted, and stood by the rough wall.

Above her Napoleon I., in bronze, gazed over at the Britain he would fain have conquered. The old *cocher*, evidently republican at heart, pointed laughingly to the statue with his whip. The sea was like a burnished mirror, without ripple or surge in the fiery radiance of noon; bath-wagons lined the beach; the *établissement* was ornamented with many flags, and skaters darted about the rink in endless maze of motion. To look down from the cliff was to marvel at it all. How could these English youths and maidens enjoy skating on an asphalt pavement beneath a broiling sun? America, the youngest nation, must have been organized without this chord of boisterous delight in sports which never flag or fail in the older Anglo-Saxon. Croquet, genteel pastime, associated with green turf, dowagers on garden-chairs, afternoon tea, and the flirtations of young people, will endure, no doubt, while matches are to be made in Great Britain and her uttermost provinces. America adopted the game with feverish energy and enthusiasm; every lawn, every door-yard, abounded in wickets to trip the unwary; discord as to rules and regulations disturbed the peace of rural life; and the fever spent itself, leaving a few *blasé* youths and maidens who do not acknowledge themselves "played out."

"Continual application to games may develop their muscles; but are their brains improved?" queried Miss Nancy, sedately.

Napoleon I., in bronze, gazed out over the calm blue sea toward the islands he never conquered, and the basket-carriage jogged down-hill once more.

"A lady waiting for me? I am very sorry to have detained you, madame." Thus speaking Miss Nancy paused in the reading-room of the Hôtel Bretagne, and confronted her strange visitor.

"My dear Miss Hawse, I have waited all my life," she replied. "I am quite used to it at my age."

"You were the steerage-passenger, and staid in the rigging that dreadful night," said Miss Nancy. "How did you find me?"

Tears gathered in her visitor's eyes, and trickled slowly down her cheeks. Miss Nancy observed that she wore mourning.

"Take me to a more retired place, where we can be alone. I have crossed the Channel to see you," she explained.

Miss Nancy led the way to her own chamber, a plain little room, with floor of red tiles, in which all the decoration expended had been lavished on a chintz canopy of elaborate construction over the bed.

"I am glad you had calm weather," she said, delicacy prompting her to afford her visitor time to recover from her evident emotion.

"The very depths of human wretchedness may be reached on one of those boats without seasickness, and the craft seems little larger than the tugs of our harbors at home. I sat for two hours drenched in spray, and with the water surging over the deck, the odor of brandy-and-water permeating every thing; ancient mariners watching hopefully all changes of complexion, armed with basins; and would-be good sailors standing in the attitude of the Colossus of Rhodes, smiles of defiance usually changing to sickly uncertainty."

The visitor was seated beside the open window, and had consented to remove her bonnet. She now presented Miss Nancy with her card as a tardy formula of introduction.

"Miss Martha Dunne."

Where had she heard that name before?

"Surely Mrs. Sharpe mentioned you in London," said our traveler.

"Mrs. Sharpe is an old friend and schoolmate of mine," replied Miss Dunne. "She wished me to join her in travel, but I have the Master's work to perform, and now, as all is changed, I must return home."

"All is changed?" Miss Nancy ventured to repeat, strangely moved, and interested in her singular companion.

The other woman clasped her hands on the table and regarded her fixedly.

"All is changed since his death," she returned, solemnly. "I owe much to you for interesting yourself to take him the slip of paper when I was not permitted to cross the steerage-rope, and for holding me that night in the rigging. Yes, I saw your face in the dawn, after you had fainted."

"You are speaking of the millionaire," said Miss Nancy, wonderingly.

"I am speaking of my brother, Hiram Dunne, a hard man and a wicked one, who has gone to his account."

"Let God judge him, then," said Miss Nancy.

"God will judge him by the record of all the years. He defrauded his own parents of their bit of land; he robbed me long ago, and then strove to make peace with his own conscience by allowing me a pittance to keep me from want, but I rejected it. He was one accursed from his very cradle. Do you know why? Because he was born with a greedy love of gold. I would pray for the uprooting of other sins and vices that taint the soul's purity; but to be born with the fangs of avarice already clutching the heart-strings, requires little less than a miracle to eradicate. He gained all that he craved of the mammon of this world: reputation for great cleverness as a financier, influence over the minds of other men, power unlimited to rob the fatherless and weak ones. If I were a Roman Catholic, I would pray for his soul after death."

Miss Nancy listened in shocked surprise. Again she saw the small form in gray, the Vandyck beard, the pinched, upturned face drifting past them in the cold dawn. Her visitor's plain, almost masculine face, changed suddenly.

"I would have saved him if I could, that night," she whispered, hoarsely. "He was not fit to die. Was I hard with him? Oh, could I have changed his nature by more tender, gentle counsel, instead of stern, bitter upbraiding? What letters I used to write him, warning him of the wrath to come!"

Miss Nancy went over and took her hand.

"Poor soul! I am sure you did your best. Reflect, if you had gone in his place, how much more must have been his remorse," she said, soothingly.

"Ah, it is easy to talk, and there is no use beating about the bush. I strove to mortify him sometimes by my poverty. I would not take a penny, and I served for my daily bread. For years all my interests have centred in the Woman's question."

"Did your brother know you were a fellow-passenger on the *Acis?*" Miss Nancy could not refrain from asking.

Martha hesitated a moment before she answered.

"No. I wished to come to England, and inspect certain systems adopted for the London poor. I had saved enough for a first-class passage, calculating also the expenses of return, and— Well, a poor, fallen Scotch girl longed to come home to die. I had not enough money for both; she must stay, or I give up my project. Besides, she needed careful nursing; so we both came together in the steerage."

Nancy put her arm around the neck of Martha Dunne, and kissed her on the cheek.

"He came to me there," continued the other, rapidly. "I wrote on that slip of paper because the Scotch girl would not have a shilling of her own when we landed. Yes, he gave her ten pounds, and wished to take me into the other cabin, but I could not leave her alone. Now I inherit all his vast wealth; I am next of kin, and he made no will."

Strange similarity of circumstances! Miss Nancy was next of kin, and Uncle Simon had made no will.

"I see the finger of Providence in it all," pursued Martha Dunne, her face lighting up as if with some spiritual inspiration. "The money falls to me — unworthy instrument that I am—in order that I may make restitution, and feed the poor."

"May the Lord prosper your resolution!" said Miss Nancy, fervently.

"Where is the pocket-book?" demanded Miss Dunne, with a pouncing swiftness of manner, and abrupt change of tone to one of dry business promptitude. "You look surprised. But for your advertisement in the English newspapers, I should not have come. I read it twice, attracted by the name of the steamer *Acis*, and laid it aside without interest. Next day it confronted me again. 'H. D.' might mean Hiram Dunne, and the book belong to my poor brother. I wrote to the address, Bayswater, London, and a young man, Howard Denby by name, called on me. The result is, I started in person, hoping to overtake you at Boulogne, for I must return by the night boat, and sail immediately for America. I am a rich woman now," she added, with a certain grim mockery of tone.

Miss Nancy trembled with repressed excitement as she gave the book to her visitor.

"Yes, this is Hiram's handwriting," she said, calmly, turning the leaves.

"Then he must have known about Uncle Simon, and what became of all his money," cried Miss Nancy, eagerly.

Martha Dunne glaced at her curiously over the rim of her spectacles.

Down in the court, the little fountain bubbled up and brimmed over the flowers; people came and went beneath the stone arch; madame, the landlady, popped in and out of her office, like a plump sparrow in a bird-house. The hours were passing unheeded, while Miss Nancy and her companion pored over the pocket-book. It was now Martha Dunne's turn to listen to the story of another woman's inheritance as next of kin.

"Mind you, Hiram was not aware of the death of this person," she said, pointing to the entry in the book relating to Uncle Simon: "Mr. Simon Warren, Lilborough, Vermont. Reply to his questions concerning his shares at early date."

"Apparently not; and yet Uncle Simon had been dead many months," said Nancy, dryly.

"A man of such business connection has many matters to occupy his thoughts. If your uncle had not written him for some time, he would have been set aside by crowds

of other people. Hiram always had his hands full of work."

All that was needed to make Miss Dunne take up the weapon of defense for her dead brother was to have another inferentially cast blame upon him, even in support of her own vehement theories.

A gray pallor of fatigue was succeeding her previous animation, and Miss Nancy perceived it, even amidst her own intense excitement at the prospect of possibly discovering the clue to Uncle Simon's lost money.

"You must come down with me to the *table-d'hôte*, and rest afterward, instead of returning to-night," she said, gently.

"No, no; let me have a cup of tea here, and a bit of toast."

So Martha Dunne slighted the *table-d'hôte* in favor of a cup of French tea, about which there was a flavor of straw, and sat nibbling a dry crust beside the open window, while Miss Nancy reluctantly quit her for the six-o'clock feast of the Hôtel Bretagne.

The banquet was spread in a spacious *salle à manger*, where various tropical birds flew along the cornice, and gracefully upheld wreaths of flowers in fresco between lace-draped windows. Oh, long white table, decorated with gorgeous flowering plants in wax and muslin, and standards of fruit which nobody is expected to consume! Oh, Barmacide feast, set forth on imposing *menu*, from watery soup with islands of carrot floating therein, morsels of veal, the wing of a partridge in a fortress of mushrooms, the ghost of a slice of roast beef, suggestive of siege acquaintance with donkey, to salads guiltless of dressing!

"*Consommée aux œufs; poisson au gratin; quenelles de volailles; choux-fleurs sauce piquante; chapon rôti; salade; pouding diplomatique; petits gateaux.*" How vividly are recalled the wearisome routine; the row of faces opposite, the owners as bored with staring at you as you are of observing their peculiarities; the feeble, chirping attempts at conversation here and there!

All these things possessed great interest for Miss Nancy as novelties, and she had even sipped, with a guilty sense of dissipation, *vin ordinaire*, the alternative being to strangle with thirst. She had childish faith in the culinary efforts of madame's husband, an invisible presence, who reigned as *chef* in the kitchen, and sent up mysterious dishes compounded with artistic elegance of mosaic fragments: his most perplexing *ragouts* did not dismay Miss Nancy's digestion. To-day all was changed. She took no part in the conversation of her neighbors, trifled with the viands, and escaped as soon as possible to her visitor again.

Martha Dunne was kneeling in prayer, with the pocket-book clasped in her hands, when Miss Nancy entered the room.

In the softly gathering summer twilight, Miss Nancy watched the Channel boat go out once more, bearing away the strange woman who had come so unexpectedly into her life. The *quai* was thronged with noisy crowds; lights flashed along the water's brink; gay strains of music issued from the *établissement*, and against the clear sky stood out the rude cross of the Mariner's Calvary guiding Martha Dunne also over stormy seas.

CHAPTER XII.

ENGAGED.

THE first Sunday in September. At St. Cloud there was a *fête*, and the waters would play.

The heat of summer lingered in the clear sky, in the radiant sunshine which steeped the verdure of the old trees gold in the hillside, and marked alleys of delightful shade among the shrubbery, where the fountains jetted columns of wavering mist like the tremulous impulse of a hope. Little steamers puffed along the river, burdened with living freight of pleasure-seekers, lines of *fiacres* and the *chemin de fer* poured streams of citizens into this one avenue leading up to the old *château*.

The way was lined with booths, games, merry-go-rounds, cooks in cap and apron, whisking delicately browned crumpets and fritters over little charcoal fires; nasal Hebrew venders of small wares; and persuasive sun-burned peasant-women selling tiny ivory toys. Parents tossed and caught the ball with their children on the grass, good-humor and gayety beamed on every face. We like to consider ourselves better than these people playing ball with the children on the grass, but are we actually superior? When we can prove ourselves such in other eyes besides our own by our record, then will it be time to feel pride in our Protestant sanctity—not yet, O Pharisee! while an enemy can shatter our glass houses with many rude stones of reproach and truth.

In the line of carriages which approached the entrance gate was one containing four strangers. As they alighted, the elder lady gathered up her silk train, and said, playfully,

"My dear Blanche, you may run on with Rockwell, and we old people will overtake you at the terrace."

"Many thanks, *madame ma mère*," replied Rockwell Cocks, lightly. "I will take good care of her," he added, looking down fondly on Blanche, who blushed, and laughed in response to his glance.

"How proud he is of her already!" said Mrs. Pierman, taking her husband's arm, and preparing to follow at such a leisurely pace as would take the lovers out of sight.

She was very considerate in these matters,

and prided herself on her diplomacy as future mother-in-law, to that distinguished match, Rockwell Cocks.

"They are just suited to each other, and will be very, very happy together," she added, musingly.

"I hope so," said Dr. Pierman, thoughtfully.

How the whole matter had come about he scarcely knew. Before he had observed the attentions of Rockwell Cocks to his daughter, Mrs. Pierman was dropping gratified hints of the circumstance, and fortifying him with suggestions as to what he must reply when the time came for speech, as parent and guardian. Rockwell Cocks would have scarcely been his choice for Blanche: possibly he was surprised at her preference. Here was the girl coming to him, laying her head on his shoulder in the old childish fashion, and clasping her arms about his neck to whisper her wonderful tidings in his ear.

"Papa, Rockwell Cocks says he loves me very much, and wants me to marry him."

"Why, you are not yet grown up," the affectionate father had said, in doubt and perplexity.

"I am eighteen years old, sir," Blanche had replied, with maidenly dignity.

"I thought it was seventeen," Dr. Pierman had demurred, abashed by his daughter's glance of reproachful indignation. "Well, do you love this young man, my pet?"

"I think so." Dimples and smiles on her face, and downcast lashes almost brushing velvet cheeks.

Dr. Pierman had kissed her, with a half sigh of regret. No man in the universe was half good enough to possess his pretty darling.

"You hope so! Now, that is just like a man," exclaimed Mrs. Pierman, as they walked up the avenue at St. Cloud.

"You *know* the couple will be very happy because you choose to think so, and that is just like a woman, my dear. How well you are looking to-day, Margaret!"

"Paris always agrees with me, John."

Mrs. Pierman was looking her best; soft black lace fell from her shoulders over her rich black dress; a single white flower relieved the velvet diadem of her exquisite bonnet; a faint bloom tinged her usually colorless cheeks.

"Your mother is very thoughtful, darling. She gives a fellow a chance to be spoony, and all that," said Rockwell, in advance.

"Perhaps she remembers that she was young once, as well," whispered Blanche, shyly.

"Yes, sweetness. Halloo! the band is going to play. We must get as far away as possible from the din."

They climbed the slope, and paused in one of the groves, where the interlacing boughs made lofty cathedral arches to exclude the day; temples roofed with foliage for fresco and decoration. The gay crowd hummed and shouted below; and along the terrace rose the great fountains, still mute, and rigid stone, *la Nante, et la basse cascade,* guarded by the statues of Seine and Marne. Rockwell Cocks regarded his companion with a smile, and took her hand.

In her cream-yellow dress she looked like a sunbeam caught amidst the dark twilight gloom of the trees. Fair to see in her youth and grace, with that softened, pensive expression on her mobile face. A quaint little bonnet, triumph of coquettish French millinery, suffered tendrils of golden hair to escape on brow and neck; delicate lace formed a ruff about the slender throat; one of Rockwell's gifts twinkled in the small ears.

"You are the priestess of this temple, or a fairy dwelling among the fountains," said Rockwell, in whom poetic simile was apt to be forced.

"I wonder if the people know, dear—"

"Know what, little priestess?"

"Know that we — are — engaged?" Blanche lifted her eyes to his face.

Know? The very statues realized the fact; smiles of varying degree of cynicism and kindliness had followed the young people all the way up the hill.

"Perhaps they do. What does it matter, pet? Very likely they consider us old married people."

"You are so sensible, always, Rockwell."

"Oh, awfully sensible. Let's have a peep at the ruins before the waters play, though. Mind the sharp stones, little feet! By Jove, you have got the prettiest foot I ever saw!"

"Do not treat me as if I were a baby," protested Blanche, laughing.

Thoughtful eyes might well be raised above the holiday throng to that rim of broken wall on the crest of the hill. How does it happen that we find only a heap of rubbish, and empty shell of crumbling interior, with a gleam of gilded cornice visible here and there, and windows forming arches for glimpses of Paris spread almost at our feet, instead of the once famous *château?* This is the end of it all—ruin and desertion.

Gift of Louis XIV. to his brother of Orleans; gift of Louis XVI. to Marie Antoinette. Henry III. was assassinated by Jacques Clément in the neighboring camp. Napoleon Bonaparte was nominated First Consul here. Blücher had his head-quarters on this spot when the city capitulated a second time. Charles X. signed the famous proclamation abolishing freedom of the press, and dissolving the Chambers,

which caused the revolution of July, 1830; and Napoleon III. made of St. Cloud a summer residence.

Then the storm followed swiftly, in German occupation of the village, in desolating blight of bombardment, in all the sufferings of war, until that conflagration of October, 1870, when *château*, barracks, and houses burned, with a chance shot from Mont Valérien, the Germans assert; when the Prussian quarters were fired and destroyed, the French affirm. No town in the environs suffered more severely, and mounds of ruins long bore testimony to the melancholy fact, as this one where the Sunday *fête* was now transpiring.

Blanche Pierman rested her arm on the ledge of a dismantled casement, Rockwell played with the fringe of her parasol. The city roofs dotted the valley with glittering vanes and spires shining in the afternoon sun; the Invalides dome rose like a golden bubble; St. Vincent de Paul framed a distant acclivity; the Pantheon towered toward the sky; and in the background was Montmartre.

"What a beautiful world it is!" said Blanche, softly.

"Yes, in fine weather," responded Rockwell, sententiously.

He also leaned on the window-ledge, and poked the mortar with his cane; he even formed his lips into an inarticulate whistle. He was trying very hard to be good, and he was growing mortally tired of the situation. Blanche charmed him after a fashion. He liked to buy her pretty gifts with reference to becomingness as adjuncts to her delicate beauty; he liked to play with her tiny fingers, and kiss her soft cheeks, and take care of her; but unwavering sweetness is apt to be cloying, and Blanche's daily injunctions from her mother were to be very sweet indeed. Not that the girl needed these instructions: she was under a spell, and something of the quiescence of mood in this spell was due to surprise at her own achievement. She was engaged to Rockwell Cocks; his ring sparkled on her finger. All her set would hear of it with wonder and envy. The tidings had already gone home, and would doubtless be printed in fashionable newspapers.

Broad alleys stretched behind them bordered with stiff box, where groups of soldiers gathered, surely the most clumsy in aspect on earth. A boy passed near humming "Vive Napoléon Quatre!" and glanced stealthily at the soldiers from beneath his brows.

Blanche, still gazing at the distant city through the window, quoted:

"'No! Not with turbulence;
Not with fret, and worry of doubt,
Not with uncertainty compassed about;
With wooing and coaxing to-day,
And thwarting and crossing to-morrow;
Not with light laughter and play,
Or too much trouble and sorrow;
Or vexed tears scorching the longing eyes,
Or pitiful glances, or penitent sighs,
Would I have love.

No! Calm and earnest, good and true,
Mellowed by tenderness through and through;
Ever the same, yet ever new;
Quietly watchful, brooding above,
O'er me, and round me—such the love—
Such the love only I care to have.'"

Rockwell Cocks suppressed a yawn with difficulty, and no less sudden animation succeeded *ennui*.

"The deuce! I did not know she was in Paris," he exclaimed.

Blanche, a trifle piqued by the yawn, turned to observe a small, fat woman, no longer young, and never handsome, magnificently attired, and followed by a lap-dog. The small, fat woman was talking with gay volubility, and every body turned to look at her.

"What a vulgar, overdressed creature!" said Blanche, half pettishly.

"My dear child, she is a celebrated actress, awfully rich, and undoubtedly *chic*. She has only to wear her bonnet cocked over one eye, or tumbling off the back of her head, and all the other women in Christendom will follow her example," said Rockwell.

"Has she, indeed!" retorted Blanche, airily. "Then I hope all the other women in Christendom look better than the original."

"Come along down again. Mamma will expect you," said Rockwell, carelessly, and glanced back at the actress, who made a little *moué* at him, considered bewitching by her admirers before the foot-lights.

Blanche grew cold from head to foot.

An old officer had appeared on the terrace in the dense crowd which had gathered since the young Americans climbed the hill. The old officer—remnant of the chivalry of other days—bowed and smiled as he expelled the people from the terrace and closed the gates. Thus driven back into smaller space, a sea of heads extended down the steps, human beings became packed to the semblance of a flower-bed, rustling and swaying with laughter and excitement.

There is a pause of expectation while the old officer paces the terrace alone; then a thread of glistening silver begins to purl down from the heights, taking a leisurely course into the waiting basins, brimming these, and presently issuing from massive jaws of heads, one by one, until with triumphant rush of sound the waters pent up during the week in secret, dark channels find the glory of outer day, springing forth in gushing volumes to meet the sparkling sunshine, the masses of green trees, the blue sky, and winding Seine below. Play, jetting fountains of St. Cloud! Would that darkened souls might never behold worse

spectacles on the seventh day than these columns and shafts of dissolving snow framed in the soft verdure of the hill!

The old officer smiled and bowed; the crowd was amused, the children in ecstasies of delight, and above the trees was visible a rim of ruined *château* wall.

"We feared you two were lost," said Mrs. Pierman, sweetly.

Her daughter was very quiet as they drove home, and Rockwell Cocks rallied her on her silent mood until diverted by passing vehicles.

Blanche had accepted her mother's instructions in the new sphere of life she was entering upon with docile obedience, and had adopted them according to the variations of her own character afterward. Rockwell Cocks was her first offer, and a very great match. What girl could remain insensible to the flattery of his choice? Blanche was her father's child in stronger traits than belonged to her mother; she was endowed with more generous impulses, a more ardent and lively imagination. Thus she received the fact of betrothal from the worldly-wise hands of her mother, as it were, but in secret colored, refined, and beautified it to a nobler ideal with rose-bloom of her own fancy. The good fortune of her success was fairly heaped upon her at every turn, clogging the wings of careless gayety. Moreover, when Mrs. Pierman was not exhorting her, Blanche was passed over, as if by mutual consent, to Mrs. Cocks, no less eloquent on the subject of her son's manifold perfections, until the horizon of her hitherto free young life became cramped to the perpetual consideration of Rockwell Cocks in all phases, because two silly women chose to worship him, one as a doting mother, and the other as an ambitious mother-in-law. This homage bored the youth himself excessively, and he would have preferred in Blanche more of the spicy raillery of their first acquaintance; but Mrs. Pierman's anxiously hovering presence and watchful glance effectually checked a flow of spirits in her daughter.

"It will be your own fault if you lose him," she would urge. "I beg of you not to try any girlish whims and foolish caprices on Rockwell, when he has such hosts of girls to choose from only too eager to catch him."

Mrs. Pierman meant no harm by this advice, but she was so vitally interested in the result. She rather respected Blanche for her conquest, yet to display such a sentiment would be highly injudicious. Blanche must be put on her mettle, and not let the prize slip through her fingers—that was all.

The girl receiving this mystery, called the homage of first love, took it into the innermost sanctuary of thought, brooded over it, wrapped it about with tender resolves of future fulfillment, until it became a pearl. Rockwell loved her. Of this she was assured daily in caresses, notes, flowers, and *bijouterie*, and the wonderful revelation filled her with humility, a certain wistful sadness in return. She would make him a good wife, studying her sphere by all models of excellence, until she attained their standard. Sometimes she tried to tell him this with flushing cheek, her touch upon his hair; and Rockwell was moved by her sweetness and devotion; but her imaginative faculties perplexed, even irritated him. He would have scorned to marry a commonplace girl; still, if Blanche did not etherealize emotion, was, in fact, a trifle more like prosaic mortals, she would become a comfortable companion.

"She is the very best child in the world!" he said one day to his mother, with remorseful vehemence. "I am a lucky dog to have secured her, but courtship is rather a strain upon a fellow when your future mother eternally smiles upon you. Heigh-ho! Is not a three-months' engagement sufficiently long?"

"You naughty boy!" said Mrs. Cocks, regarding him with proud complacency.

In the carriage, Mrs. Pierman and her prospective son kept the ball of conversation in motion. Blanche was silent.

In the Bois, people were lying on the grass, as if clinging to summer with all the ardor of a population loving to dwell out-of-doors, and for whom the dreary sleet would come by-and-by. No marvel that the trees seemed dwarfed, the shrubbery insignificant, for twice had the timber been felled in these years; once during the Russian and English investment, and lately by the besieged. The lakes lay tranquil in the warm light; *châlets* and *cafés* peeped invitingly out of the foliage of the islands; there was no flash of torch-light in revels on skates; but the *grandes dames*, in marvelous toilets, drove along, unfurling their dainty parasols instead.

Revolving sprays of water refreshed the greensward; here a liquid wheel; there a slower sweep as of a fan, or the plumy movement of a fern frond. How exquisite is this refining of the beautiful, making of the spouting column a lace-work veil of dew-drops shed upon the air, like the fleeting aroma, the very perfume of sprinkling, gemming without drenching each flower, petal, and grass blade!

The margin of cream-colored dwellings, and then the Arc de l'Étoile, rose against the blue sky, with that brilliant vista all blooming with flowers, down the broad Champs Élysées, and through the trees—like destiny—the dismantled Tuileries beyond. The golden tide of expiring day gleamed on the obelisk of the Place de la Concorde, and brought out the white statues in fine relief. There sat the majestic sisterhood of cities,

Lille, Strasburg, Nantes, Rouen, Brest, Marseilles, and Lyons; and in their midst the fountains, Pacific and Mediterranean, sending the tribute of the seas over to the rivers Rhine and Rhone.

Mrs. Pierman discussed the relative merits of Tiffany's jewelry in comparison with certain French shops; Dr. Pierman made an entry in his note-book of an hour when he could gain admittance to a private hospital. Who in all that tide of life, flowing up and down the spacious promenade, remembered that the sisterhood of cities on their stone pedestals guarded something more than the gleaming obelisk, the sparkling fountains?—a spot where Châteaubriand affirmed all the water in the world would fail to wash away the blood-stains; where the guillotine claimed its thousands: Louis XVI., the first victim; Marie Antoinette, the stately, heroic woman with gray hair, known to all history; Charlotte Corday; Brissot, chief of the Girondists; and Princess Elizabeth Marie following.

"Dear me! are those Smiths in Europe, John? Over there, Rockwell—the landau with the blue wheels, and a lady in lavender and white lace. They made their money in whisky, you know, a few years ago. Oh yes, new people." This from Mrs. Pierman, craning her neck to watch the unfortunate victims of her criticism.

"I know them. One of the girls is jolly," returned Rockwell.

"More jolly than lady-like, perhaps," assented Mrs. Pierman, with a dry laugh of conscious superiority.

Charming little Parc de Monceaux, with parterres of rainbow-hued flowers, and a veil of mist hanging over green lawns from threads of falling waters. Once brilliant with *fêtes* and balls, where the Duchesse de Chartres, mother of Louis Philippe, reigned in splendor of beauty and gorgeous costumes; now the playground of countless pale children, the resort of ladies who trifle away the afternoon with needle-work, not unmindful of the effect of their high-heeled slippers and silk stockings on passing mankind.

Clouds had vanished from Blanche Pierman's face long ere they reached the Grand Hôtel. One had only to stretch out a hand to find friends; her lover was beside her: she was very fortunate to have secured his attachment. Visions of a bridal veil and pearls, of beautiful dresses and embroideries belonging to the Parisian *corbeille de mariage*, floated through her brain.

"Shall I engage a box at the Opera for tomorrow evening? You are so awfully prim not to go Sunday night, when it is the fashion here," whispered Rockwell, pressing her hand as he assisted her out of the carriage.

"That will be delightful," smiled Blanche, in return.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE O'CLOCK AT THE HÔTEL CLUNY.

EARLY the following Monday morning a lady entered the Church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois with the slow step and meditative aspect peculiar to a tourist. Moreover, the red cover of "Baedeker" peeped out from under her arm, that universal badge of the roaming tribes who regard each other with a half-friendly, half-cynical recognition on the high-roads of travel. How venerable the exterior, as if all the wars of race had beaten against the gray walls! How quaint the arched porch, towers, and gable, crowned with "Angel of the Judgment," and gilded frescoes about the portal—"Christ on the Cross," "Descent of the Holy Ghost," and "Mount of Olives!" The interior was dark with heavy wood-work, and each window gleamed like a jewel of surpassing richness in the gloomy obscurity.

Outside, the September sun, shining in an unclouded sky, touched, as if with a prism, these stained panes, making them glow, while shadowy darkness elsewhere filled the edifice. A young lady knelt in passionate absorption before a shrine of the Virgin; a priest lighted the candles of an altar which twinkled like clustering stars; a few old women, clad in shabby black, sat in contemplative attitude in the nave. These are the pathetic, often-tranquil forms which beautify Catholicism. Blessed is such a haven of rest as makes the religion of old age.

The angels grouped about the cross, designed by Madame de Lamartine, seemed to hover in the south transept. The chapel where St. Denis was interred after martyrdom was shrouded in blackest night; a dim old church, with peaceful age seated in calm contemplation, and turbulent youth spending itself in supplication before the Virgin; a church with a history gained by scarred walls; in the Fourth Arrondissement used as a mayor's office, and in 1831 stormed by a mob while mass was being performed for the murdered Duc de Berri by the Bourbon family. Is this the sole interest of the hushed, still building?

Miss Nancy, for it was she, walked up the aisle, and paused. Hark! a dull sound reverberated through the place, awakening dreary echoes, succeeded by a musical chime of bells tinkling the half-hour, and a band of little acolytes, in red gowns and white surplices, moved toward the altar. Was it only the clang of a heavy door, or the ghostly echo, rendered fainter and fainter by lapsing years, of the great bell which gave the signal for St. Bartholomew's, and tolled from the tower all through the awful night its funeral-peal? Always to be remembered through the ages, old church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, for the metal voice of thy bell!

Over yonder in the Louvre is the Apollo Gallery, most celebrated of pictured interiors, rich with gilding, bronze, fresco, tapestries, marble, and cases of enamels and crystal, from whence Charles fired on his subjects with a carbine. We need not disbelieve that horror haunted his sleepless pillow afterward, or that the shriveled, puny soul found its burden too great, even in this world. Miss Nancy glanced at the windows, wondering which one might be the monarch's casement, with a little shudder, and emerged into the street once more.

The charm of the fair metropolis was already full upon her. Every thing was admirable, beautiful, gay, and inspiriting. One disbelieved in storms and dull skies; perpetual sunshine belonged to Paris. London, vast and crowded with traffic, puts to shame many American cities for cleanliness; while the French capital is so far in advance of London, that the boulevards have the appearance of being scrubbed daily. Just as Anglo-Saxon method in most aims is refined by the Gaul, so the huge watering-cart of London and New York, lumbering stupidly along, and gushing unexpectedly over pedestrians while making a track of mud between spaces of unslaked dust, is replaced in Paris by an artist in blouse, who transports a little pipe on wheels, sprinkling delicately and effectually the widest thoroughfare, because he gives his whole mind to the occupation.

Miss Nancy had journeyed from Boulogne to Paris after the memorable interview with Martha Dunne, and on that first journey on the Continent she had been completely worsted. After the leisurely and delightful English mode of seeking a dépôt when disposed, and being stowed away by a mild and civil guard, she was here pent up in a stifling waiting-room with a crowd of other human beings, who regarded each other with the ferocity of wild animals, trampling upon one another in the frantic endeavor to escape through the reluctantly opened door, and scramble into the arrived train. Men pushed Miss Nancy aside, and took advantage of their own muscle to do so, to her inexpressible indignation. She came from a New World where women almost unconsciously take the best places, and she emerged so ingloriously from the tussle that the interior of a stuffy carriage was accorded her, with such distant views as windows wholly under the control of her neighbors afforded.

"Why do they not take a lesson from us?" thought Miss Nancy, flushed and panting, with a sense of angry humiliation at having been so buffeted. "I should think it was time they learned *some things*. Thank goodness, Mrs. Sharpe is not here!" In oppressive heat; in the semi-obscurity necessary to shield a French lady's dress from dust and sun on one side; in cramped inaction of attitude, Miss Nancy passed those weary hours, her only diversion the silent and persistent warfare waged over the opposite window.

Vis-à-vis sat a fair, ruddy Englishman and a fair, ruddy Prussian. The Englishman opened the window; the Prussian closed it.

"Perhaps they will fight. I wonder if they ever do come to blows over windows here?" thought Miss Nancy, in some trepidation. The space was so limited.

The Englishman measured his opponent with his eye, and opened the window. The Prussian measured his opponent with his eye, and closed it again. No words were exchanged. So like, and yet so antagonistic, will such petty battles as these be the only ones waged between the two races in the future? Miss Nancy sighed.

"I believe the English are the only people who desire a breath of fresh air. I wish they would overrun and conquer the rest of Europe."

What a nightmare ride that was, in the middle seats! A sombre expanse of brown landscape with stretches of salt-marsh, where the sea made up, was occasionally visible. Once she heard a little melody. Was it a dryad piping in a wilderness? Gabriel Oak's flute? The train paused, the little pipe trilled on, brisk, accurate, with a certain infectious gayety. The train moved, and the performer appeared, a peasant in blue frock, standing beside the wall playing on a straight reed instrument. Other peasants listened attentively; the guards smiled approval; even Miss Nancy appreciated the rhythm of the sprightly measure.

Once in Paris, there was a night of reckless extravagance spent at a hotel. Our school-marm sat long at her window, gazing out into a court where horses pranced, and opposite casements afforded her glimpses, like successive cabinet pictures, of polished corridor and velvet sofa screened by lace, or footmen lounging in gilded arm-chairs with knee-breeches of crimson satin, white-silk stockings, and buckled shoes, like the actors of old English comedy. Could these gorgeous creatures be only the servants of a club? Next day she had sought a modest *pension*, whither Mrs. Sharpe would come later, and discovered a landlady who aspired smilingly to establish her reputation on American dishes, which would have made the hair of certain New England housewives rise on end with horror and dismay.

Outside the Church of St. Germain, Miss Nancy paused and consulted her watch.

"I promised to meet him at one o'clock," she said.

The Seine flowed along beneath bridges, beside the magnificent pile of Louvre, a toy river, with little toy boats floating on its surface. A young noble was crossing the

bridge from the old Faubourg Parisien, carefully well-dressed, yet quiet, refined, a certain *je ne sais quoi* about master, and unobtrusive equipage that marked him with distinctive individuality. Will your own authors ever describe you, young noble, with the matchless grace and elegance of Lord Bulwer Lytton in his "Parisians?"

Cocoa-venders still carried their burnished cans hung with bells, and offered the beverage to the thirsty. Laborers, brown, meagre, and dusty, still slept at noon in their wheelbarrows, with heavy *sabots* cast off, or in the shadow of a wall. A *blanchisseuse*, with a cream-colored handkerchief crossed on her breast, knitted as she drove slowly along in her little cart. Miss Nancy wondered if the gay capital, fresh and sparkling to her eyes in the September morning, could ever be associated with rain and cloud. The very crack of the Paris *cocher's* whip is so eminently characteristic — a thin, sharp, brisk flick of the lash, rapid rather than violent, and entirely without effect on his emaciated steed — the very ghost of a horse in more prosperous times.

Our school-marm found herself in a sea of dangers, lured by the siren voices of French shop-women into whirlpools of extravagant purchase. She saw no such young person as the typical shop-girl at home—pert, tired, indifferent, her hair dressed in the latest fashion, her thoughts astray on last night's ball, possibly. She pays dearly for the candle, poor young thing, in loss of bloom, headache, nervous irritability, all of which react on her employer's customers. On the boulevards Miss Nancy encountered, perhaps, a stout, elderly shop-woman, in a cotton gown, with a white collar, the coarseness of her plain features alone relieved by a pleasant smile. Beware of the large hands that hover so deftly over her wares, the persuasive inflection of her voice which would beguile the last centime from a purchaser's purse; and yet there is just as much difference between her adaptive grace and the fawning, wheedling tones of the Hebrew vender as between solid gold and the flashy, pinchbeck imitation. What caressing attention in shops of glove and perfumery! What dainty devices in ribbons and lace! As the fair leader of fashion, Eugénie, has departed, the goddess set in a shrine for universal feminine worship, all cities make their own styles, and the result attained may be greater independence.

"Thank Heaven! a woman need not stake her immortal soul on a hat-brim turning up or down," mused Nancy.

She was like a child in fairy-land, her attention attracted by a dozen magnets at once. Here was a *magazin Russe*, with the proprietor, broad-featured and Calmuck, smiling in the door-way. What an ingenious people in invention of little articles of comfort, from the polished *samovar* to the tiny egg-shaped receptacle for roasting coffee by means of alcohol, and the brass cup, fitting within another cup, adapted to boiling water almost in one's pocket! What Liliputian tea-pots, scarcely holding a sip of the delicate beverage, labeled in the window at twenty rubles per pound. No other European nation, save the Russians, know the full luxury of yellow overland tea. America is satisfied with coarsest dregs in comparison.

Nancy laughed as she reflected on the consolation of the "cup that cheers" to grandmother in Briarbush. What must be the delight, in degree, of the Chinese old lady able to drink the decoction of scarcely dried blossoms, all the fragrant sweetness lingering!

Here were bric-à-brac shops, vying with the windows of their neighbors in fascination, whether heaped with soft, rainbow-hued fabric, or glittering with stars and wreaths of precious stones, clocks in carved ebony, enamels, pictures, Italian cabinets, and antique bronzes. Here was a revelation in art in the window of a *patissier* to Nancy, from Briarbush, hitherto confined within the narrow limits of cookies, doughnuts, and home-made cake: *brioche* of delicate complexion, little scrolls of *plaisir*, puffs of crisp brown texture, chocolate castles, crystallized spheres containing snowy cream. The variety of delicacies seemed endless.

"I must taste one," and Miss Nancy, mustering her French boldly, attacked a mysterious *méringue* which melted deliciously on her palate with the most satisfactory results.

Tapers burned about an altar of the Madeleine; a carpet was spread down the steps for a bride, who approached the church, curiosity following her movements as in all lands. Middle-aged, composed, attired in black silk, her only bridal badge a white bonnet and an enormous bouquet, she chatted with her escort; the bridal party followed; and the groom, his years made jaunty by a becoming costume, as only a Frenchman's may be, gave orders to his coachman below. Opposite extended the Rue Royale. A toy-merchant, obese and contented, stood beneath a canopy of balls in pink netted bags, dolls, and wagons. A little olive-skinned man had decorated the wall with photographs, even gayly colored books of the siege, sold, with many shrugs and smiles, for two francs.

The bride ascends the steps, the merchants sell their wares. Only the walls of the older houses have the aspect of hiding such secrets as a time when Communists planted cannon, and *mitrailleuses* blocked the exit, sweeping the Place de la Concorde; when frenzy culminated in storms of bullets and shells, in flames fed by petroleum from en-

gines which should have quenched, in falling roofs and crushed inmates. But that belongs to the past.

Retracing her steps along the boulevard, Miss Nancy paused opposite the Grand Hôtel, enchanted by madame the doll. Clumsy effigy of rag, dragged by one foot around the nursery; sphinx-like wooden dolly, with staring eyes, a hard complexion, and angular figure, pet and confidante of the neat little maiden with golden hair; insipid wax lady with tow ringlets, laid away for state occasions that your tinsel may not become tarnished by rude fingers, how would you hide your abashed faces and battered bodies in the presence of madame the doll? We have no silly, inexperienced demoiselles here, if you please, but always madame, cool, assured, haughty, a queen of society, with well-deserved faith in her *modiste.* She plays on the piano in dinner toilet of purple-velvet jacket and blue silk; she tries on a new glove, equipped for the promenade; she emerges from the bath-house at Trouville in ravishing *négligée;* she toys with her gold eyeglass, ready for the Bois, and she is everywhere a doll of the world, knowing perfectly well what she is about. If one of the dowdy rag dollies should gaze in the window at her dainty trimmings, flowing trains, and crisp laces, the spirit of emulation would so imbue her that she would seek the same *modiste,* and do likewise, if father and husband dollies were ruined by the bills.

"Miss Nancy, how are you?" cried a fresh young voice.

Miss Nancy turned with a flush of pleasure to greet Blanche Pierman. The girl looked very pretty and happy. Certain gentlemen sipping absinthe outside the adjacent *café* soon favored her with their undivided attention.

"I saw you from our windows at the hotel," explained Blanche. "Oh, you need not attempt to run away, for I am going to take you back with me."

"I have an engagement, my dear," demurred Miss Nancy. She was rejoiced to see her favorite once more; but she would never cross the threshold of Margaret Pierman again, after her conduct in London — "unless she should need me," thought the once friend, standing on the wide boulevard surrounded by the full tide of noonday.

"That is only an excuse," pleaded Blanche, clinging to her arm. "I am all alone this morning. Where are you going?"

"To the Hôtel Cluny," said Miss Nancy, with some hesitation.

"I love the dear old Cluny. Let me go with you; unless you have other company," added Blanche, quickly.

"I should like you to come, of all people; if your mother—"

"My mother has gone to Versailles with Mrs. Cocks. You can not get rid of me so easily, you perceive. Do let me go, Miss Hawse. I will be very good, and we can look in at Monroe's to tell papa."

A curious expression flitted across Miss Nancy's face, succeeded by one of subdued triumph.

"Come, then, by all means. I shall be only too glad of your company. The hour is one."

"Why one o'clock?" demanded Blanche.

"Oh, one is a good hour, and gives you plenty of time to enjoy every thing," replied Miss Nancy, somewhat evasively.

The companionship of Blanche did prove delightful. Had not her own gayety, which was that of one emancipated, absorbed her, the repressed excitement and constraint of Miss Nancy's manner might have attracted her attention. Miss Nancy must go to the Bon Marché on Mondays — every one did. Had she done the Louvre? Oh dear! nobody went there much after the first European journey. It was all very lovely; but, then, one had so much else to do—shopping, and endless visiting. A recent English writer termed it "that place of torment" where one only went to see the people.

"I consider such nonsense simply wicked," said Miss Nancy, aroused to speech. "If one ever becomes too *blasé* to learn something from the beautiful in art, it is high time to die."

"Now you are going to scold; but I am determined not to be scolded," said Blanche. "Let us take our *déjeûner* in the garden, where ladies may come unescorted."

Blanche had spoken of Howard Denby and the *Acis* with a certain dignified frankness; but Miss Nancy had parried the remarks uneasily, and in turn had scarcely listened when Blanche spoke guardedly of the Cocks. She was thinking of a far more important matter.

The girl, as cicerone, led the way to the little *café* in the Tuileries, where they sat beneath a striped awning, and discussed their cutlets and salads and rose-tinted ices. The broad alleys branching from the orangeries were bordered with familiar asters, and dahlias, autumn's livery in yellow and rich maroon hues. The Terrasse — once playground of the King of Rome, Comte de Paris, and the Prince Imperial — was now trodden by other feet.

Blanche had removed her glove; the sun smote sparks of light from the superb gem on her small finger. If Miss Nancy noticed it, she would tell her mighty secret then and there. But Miss Nancy had withdrawn her gaze from the shrubberies to furtively consult her watch.

"Perhaps we had better go," she said, rising with feigned leisurely aspect and inward trepidation.

There is a spot in Paris where venerable trees shed a green twilight over mossy old

gardens, ornamented with quaint saints on pedestals, and Roman heads, and ivy — stanch companion of crumbling gray walls —droops from parapet and deserted casement. Within a stone's-throw of *quais*, bridges, and boulevards, modern magnificent Paris all around, stands this old dwelling, once residence of a Roman emperor in the days of Gaul's conquest, once a cloister of Cluny monks, once home of the *savant*, M. du Sommerand. Traces there are of the first possession, in rough and massive ruins of *thermæ;* traces of the second, in winding stairway, balcony, and chapel, lofty, and arched, with narrow altar and stained window; traces of the third, in the untold riches of a museum filled with the rarest gems and treasures.

Miss Nancy and Blanche Pierman entered the large gate, and glanced about them. At one angle of the court stood a gentleman smoking his cigar. The *concierge* advanced to inspect the new-comers, and prepared with dignity to exercise some of a nearly vanished authority in demanding a passport.

"I thought we no longer needed them over here," said Miss Nancy, dismayed.

"Allow me to use a visiting-card instead," said a voice behind the ladies.

Blanche turned, and confronted Howard Denby. A deep flush of surprise or annoyance was the young man's first token of recognition. The girl, far more composed, although with additional color, held out her hand.

"What a very great stranger you have become, Mr. Denby!" she said.

A smile of satisfaction illumined Miss Nancy's honest, tell-tale face, effectually clearing away all doubts. She had agreed to meet Howard Denby at the Cluny, in the hope of bringing possible tidings of Blanche Pierman. How much beyond her dreams was it to produce the girl's living presence, blooming, bright, and sweet! Since the interview with Howard Denby at Brighton our traveler had been in constant correspondence with him, and, far from resenting the intrusion of her active interest, he responded to it with animation. Ah, Howard Denby, did the little cameo treasured in your pocket have any thing to do with your correspondence with good Miss Nancy? How was it that you found leisure to visit Paris, and meet the lady at the Cluny?

"The exterior is very interesting, I believe," observed the school-marm; and paused to gaze at the massive arch, the pinnacled wall ornamented with fine sculpture, mullioned windows, open balustrade, and dormers with carved pediments.

"It is the very dearest old place," said Blanche. "I always liken it to a large cabinet filled with curiosities and objects of art. Look at the spiral stairway yonder, Mr. Denby, and remember that Anne Boleyn, when a gay little maid of honor, aged fourteen, used to trip down to the garden where we see the artist copying the Roman arch at this moment, and the children in blue blouses at play."

"Yes," assented Howard Denby, and looked at Blanche instead with those searching, half-melancholy gray eyes that women like.

The glance made her uncomfortable, shy, half doubtful of herself. It seemed as if he had only to command when he looked at one like that.

"As if I could ever do any thing for him!" thought Blanche, and stumbled on the step of a dark corridor.

"Mind the stones, little feet," said Howard, softly, and, laying his hand on her arm, looked down on her with a smile.

Strange! These were the very words of Rockwell Cocks yesterday. Perhaps every one would always treat her like a baby, though. Blanche hesitated, and glanced around; the opportunity might never come again to speak with him. The corridor was very dark: courage might be gathered from this twilight obscurity. Miss Nancy stood in a large chamber in advance before a cabinet of Florentine mosaic, supported on columns of lapis lazuli, and crowned by silver figures; while a coffer of wrought steel occupied the centre of the polished floor, and ebony unfolded in leaves and flowers of rich workmanship in chairs and tables along the wall.

Blanche looked up at her companion, swayed gently toward him, and said, in subdued, slightly tremulous accents, "You were naughty to run away like that — after the terrible night — and never speak to me again."

He was speaking to her now, a language of longing and tenderness in the gray eyes which she did not dare to meet. He stooped over her suddenly, and the golden mustache touched her cheek.

"My darling, I ran away because I was afraid to stay."

Playing with fire, indeed! If any of the lounging guards had seen, with their ready French smile of drollery and amusement! If Miss Nancy had but turned back! An exquisite figure slept on an ivory couch on a level with Blanche's head; Mary Magdalene, in rude, ancient relief, watched the door of the empty sepulchre on an adjacent bracket; the Virgin leaned from a crumbling frame on the wall, bending in agonized grief over the dead Christ on her knees.

Blanche darted forward and stood beside Miss Nancy, glad of the mellow light falling through stained glass, her cheek scorched by Howard Denby's kiss. Why would he not understand her gratitude better? How stupid men were!

"The gold altar belonged to the Emperor Henry II. of Germany," she explained, with unnecessary eagerness.

"How delusive are catalogues!" assented Miss Nancy, turning the leaves of her book. "I have chased this curious piece of work all through the volume."

There stood the altar of beaten gold guarded by Gothic doors—Christ made gigantic—by contrast with a humble little emperor and empress kneeling at his feet.

How did it happen that Howard Denby had come to the rescue so easily and unobtrusively, claiming Miss Nancy's undivided attention for cases of Venetian glass, bubbles flecked with gilt and imprisoned in slender stems, boxes of silver and shell that moved her to wildest envy, illuminated manuscripts that put to shame the most patient industry of modern times? Blanche could steal a glance at him, thus left to herself, and not detest him so intensely for his boldness. What a success he would be in society, with that fair complexion and straight profile! How well he carried himself, with a certain distinction which can not be assumed with a man's coat! Having given her a little time to recover composure, he contrived to whisper,

"I really beg your pardon, Blanche; but she did not see us."

Blanche opened her eyes widely, her vivid color faded. Here was a worse dilemma: Howard Denby's tone had the half-playful meaning of one who has a confidence already established. He was whispering in her ear, as if they were lovers.

"I think I should go home," said the girl, helplessly; but neither of her companions noticed the remark.

Beautiful old Cluny, how alluring you appeared just then, when young feet should choose another way than your winding corridors! Faded tapestry hung on the walls; vestments heavy with embroidery claimed attention for once distinguished wearers; a sedan-chair was placed by the door; St. Denis, in alabaster, revealed stiff little kings lying in state on miniature tombs; and in a case were a pair of small slippers—Princess de Lamballe's pathetic, faded little shoes! The story goes that one of her kinsmen ran after the headless body in the mob, and rescued these from the dead feet, to be cherished as souvenirs of the beautiful woman. Blanche followed mechanically past the sedan-chair out into the inclosed space devoted to famous equipages.

"You are tired," suggested Howard, gently.

"No," said Blanche, feeling unaccountably disposed to cry.

Miss Nancy smiled again to herself. No barrier should spring up between these two that she could remove. In her own youth discord had been sown with a lavish hand, and had borne its bitter harvest of suffering. John's child must not mourn as she had done, if she could avert it; and Miss Nancy felt profound confidence in her own skill and diplomacy as she prepared to see the state coaches of the Hôtel Cluny. She would be Howard's advocate with Dr. Pierman; she would even nerve herself to encounter Mrs. Pierman for such a result. Surely they must see that this youth and maiden were born to make each other happy.

A sleigh, in form a richly gilded dragon, with carbuncle eyes, blue pendant about the neck, and little seat of blue satin, met Miss Nancy's delighted eyes. Never had our school-marm, in the quiet seclusion of her New England home, dreamed of such magnificence. State coaches, with white reins embroidered in gold; satin-lined interiors; springs that rock with cradle-motion; steps lowered for royal feet like a succession of drawers; and boxes gorgeous with imposing crests. Here a pope was drawn by six steeds abreast, footmen perched behind, and the Borghese arms emblazoned on the carriage. Here the French embassador at the court of St. James's swayed along in the reign of Louis XV. Pity that the wheels of royalty ever came off in the ruts of prosperity's road. Powdered heads seem still to recline against the satin cushions, haughty glances to bend condescendingly earthward and rest on the *canaille*. The sleigh-bells jingle, and merry young Queen Marie Antoinette glides over the ice, a vision of loveliness, drawn by her golden dragon. Never was more fatal emblem of a reign than this ice surface, the crystal raft between her and the black, sullen waters; and yet she passes on, proud Maria Teresa's daughter, a meteor, all brilliant scintillations, a part of the day's splendor as well, lips smiling that will lose the power of smiling by-and-by, and bright eyes undimmed by the tears in store when the crystal raft shall have melted, and she be left a prey to the ingulfing flood.

"Now we must see the chamber of La Reine Blanche," said Miss Nancy, consulting her catalogue.

"Here she is!" said Howard Denby, in so blithe a tone that Blanche recovered some measure of her good spirits.

Upstairs the polished floor extended from one room to another in long vistas, dark ceilings, and walls enriched with carving and stained glass. The queen's chamber was small, and like the interior of a box; heavy beams meeting an elaborate high chimney-piece, walls deeply wainscoted, and some faint, intangible perfume of memory lingering about it still. A state bed, with hangings of rich red damask, formed the sole point of glowing color; dim, ghostly pictures hung in corners; a spinet, incrusted with ivory Venetian work of the fourteenth century, and a harp, stood in the back-

ground. Caskets there were of surpassing richness, and a case of musical instruments —fairy pocket violins, inlaid with pearl, silver, and ebony, of Louis XIII.'s day; each having yielded sweetness to dead fingers in its little tunes. Beyond were the arches of the small chapel, where the wraith of the fair widow may still linger.

Grand in their hospitality, the abbots placed their house at the disposal of the kings of France. Mary Tudor, handsome daughter of the house of York, here mourned for her elderly spouse, Louis XII., robed in white, after royal custom, with tapers lighted.

"Anne Boleyn was transferred to the court of Queen Claude, when La Reine Blanche cast aside her weeds and secretly married the English duke, her early love, in the small chapel," said Miss Nancy, in her schoolmistress tone.

The two young people had turned toward the chapel, and did not even listen. Miss Nancy walked in the opposite direction, with an expression of such beaming satisfaction and shrewd intelligence, that the next guard removed his cocked hat in anticipation of a question rendered in the best Briarbush French. She rambled on, until she found dishes and enamels ranged against the walls, with old Venetian mirrors set deep in brass frames behind; porcelain with the iridescence of a conch-shell, or yellow and blue in huge urns; and vases with saints limned in the centre. She had leisure to study the chimney-piece of painted stone from Maus, and its curious three ages of man, so that conversation in the chapel was not interrupted.

At last she found Palissy, the potter, a man reverenced by the minister, who wrought in pain and sorrow, chilled by winter storms, disheartened by poverty and scoffing incredulity, yet with high courage holding this one desperate, tenacious resolve in life, and heaping household furniture on the furnace for fuel.

Father used to say, "There was a man!" Would that the world paid ten times the gold coin of appreciation in posterity, Bernard Palissy, in recognition of labor such as thine! Through the darkness and the storm you toiled, unswerving in moments of bitterest need. Let us set your light on the hill, humble artist in clays, that

> "Some forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
> Seeing, shall take heart again."

Here Palissy spread cool green leaves and sedgy tangles of weed, with delicate scallop-shells caught in their meshes; or the spectator peeped into the depths of a brook where the fish were about to leap and quiver; their sides of inimitable metallic lustre, eels writhed, and cray-fish scaled the brim. Miss Nancy almost longed to touch the work of the great Huguenot master, marveling at its reality; and in it she beheld, not simply a dish of unique design, but the Bernard Palissy of history.

Still rambling on, she found La Chambre Verte deserted, and sunk into a carved arm-chair to meditate. What a field for fancy did these moldy hangings of Genoese velvet, these frayed cushions and *fauteuils* unfold! Harpsichords, once melodious to the ear of Maréchal Antoine, Coiffier Ruze, Marquis d'Effiat, whose *château* was so carefully preserved from the date of its erection until 1856, guarding treasures of other generations zealously, and its decorations of the early days of its century! The year 1856 opened the casket, scattered the relics broadcast at public sale, and of the marquis and his unfortunate son, Cinq Mars, remain only such fragments as the Cluny has gathered to its bosom. The shapes of the dead must revisit these dim apartments at midnight if ever floors echo to ghostly tread—monks, kings, warriors, artists, and the etherealized semblance of sorrowful Queen Anne in the flower of childhood.

In the chapel, Howard Denby had taken both of Blanche Pierman's hands, and was striving to catch a glimpse of her averted face.

"I will not hurt you, but you shall listen to me," he was saying, almost fiercely. "It is no light matter for a man to come to loving a woman as I love you. Yes, I love you, Blanche, sweet, darling Blanche, and you shall hear it. Didn't you know when you sent the little cameo? Ah, how good of you to remember me! No, no; the guards are *not* looking, dear."

"You must hear *me*," gasped Blanche, pale and distressed, and still avoiding his gaze. "I have something to tell you."

There was a moment's pause, then he released her hands suddenly, and inquired, in a gloomy tone,

"Well, what have you to tell me? Let me know the worst."

It was her turn to regard him now. The girl came accordingly close to his side, and took one of his hands between her own little palms.

"I am grateful for what you did for me. I would show my interest if I could. I can not tell how this has all occurred, and there is some dreadful mistake."

The light fell through the narrow window, pallid and white, showing the faint lineaments of Virgin and martyrs on the upper panes, showing Blanche Pierman below, grown more womanly, tremulous, almost appealing, as she looked up at him.

"It is all a mistake; for I am already engaged to Rockwell Cocks."

"To Rockwell Cocks? Then curse him!"

Miss Nancy sat in the old arm-chair meditating, her thoughts astray on the couple

in the chapel, on the articles of value in this Chambre Verte.

"Mais, madame, madame! C'est la chaise de Dagobert!"

The warning voices spoke, hissed through adjacent rooms; the footsteps of idle guards resounded like hounds coming to the chase. She sprung up from the venerable seat, which groaned threateningly when released from her weight, and fled in confusion.

What had she done? Tested the feeble back and paralytic legs of a historical chair. Heavens! if it had broken beneath her, should she have been given over to the tender mercies of a police most brusque to foreigners in these days?

The tiny chapel was very dark and still. Had they gone out into the garden, down the winding stair of the little maid, Annie Boleyn? No; Blanche Pierman sat on the stone bench: she was alone.

"My dear, what is the matter?"

Mrs. Pierman's daughter was not weeping. She sat with her hands lying listlessly in her lap, and with the aspect of one who has been stunned by an unexpected blow.

"Nothing." Her voice was dry and calm.

"Where is Howard Denby?" inquired Miss Nancy, in alarm.

"He has gone away. Tell me, did you bring me here to meet him?"

Miss Nancy considered; her eye fell.

"I certainly thought it might give you both pleasure."

"Oh, he will never forgive us for this, Miss Hawse! Never! never! And it might have been all prevented. Why did you not tell him the truth?"

"The truth, my darling," repeated the older woman, feeling as if the ground were giving way beneath her feet.

"Yes, yes: that I am already engaged," fretfully.

"Because I did not know it."

"I have tried to tell you all day. You would not even see my ring," with a little laugh.

"Engaged to marry another man, when Howard Denby loves you! I am disappointed, Blanche; and I must say it—you are a frivolous, wicked girl to have tampered with his noblest affections solely to gratify your own vanity." Miss Nancy spoke with energy akin to anger. "Some time you will be sorry."

"I am nothing of the sort," retorted Blanche, with spirit.

They drove homeward along the Boulevard St. Michel, silent, excited, and mutually unhappy. Presently Miss Nancy inquired, with stiff dignity,

"Do you intend to marry the young man Cocks?"

"Yes."

Blanche winced. For some indefinable cause Rockwell did not appear so great a match in Miss Nancy's presence as elsewhere. Suddenly the girl bounded on the seat, the pupils of her eyes contracted.

The gentleman in question stood beside the open door of a superb carriage, talking with the inmate, a small, fat woman, no longer young, with an *outré* hat on one side of her head.

"And he never even saw me," murmured the *fiancée*, in her fair young beauty.

"Blanche, forgive me if I spoke unkindly. I had no right to be angry; and I wished to see you two happy. I am only a foolish old woman, my dear, who makes sad blunders with really good intentions," said Miss Nancy, with humility.

"No, no; you are always kind," protested Blanche, with a sob. "Tell him I was not to blame; promise to tell him that."

Not trusting herself for further speech, she pressed Miss Nancy's hand, and, entering the hotel, disappeared. Very much crest-fallen, Miss Nancy took her way to her *pension* in discouraged loneliness and silence. The joyous spring-time which she would fain have sheltered after the lesson of her own experience, had only received a double blow from her interference.

The clock struck eight on the chimney-piece of a *salon* in the Grand Hôtel. Dr. Pierman was dining out. Mrs. Pierman sat in her arm-chair, the model of elegance, smoothing reflectively one of her cream-colored gloves.

"Patience, my dear; Rockwell has been detained, and will be here soon," she said.

Blanche was moving about the room restlessly, and paused with her eyes fixed on the clock-dial. A French artist has painted a figure not unlike her in that attitude of waiting. The wax-candles shed a soft radiance over her rose-pink dress and bare shoulders, the *marguerites* starred with diamond dewdrops in her hair; a soft wrap of fleecy white silk and fur on a chair.

"Why does he not come!" she exclaimed, impatiently, tapping her rounded arm with her lace fan.

"Tut, tut!" replied her mother, soothingly. "Mathilde really surpassed herself in that corset waist."

"What does it matter?" sighed Blanche, wearily.

She had told her mother nothing of the afternoon's adventure. Mrs. Pierman would fret, and fretting is the most tiresome phase of scolding. Howard Denby's words still rang in her ears; the little chapel, so dark and cold, had become animate with the passion of his wooing voice, persuasive, mellow, and tender. She longed to escape from remembrance of the painful scene in the diversions of the Opera and the hilarious merriment of her betrothed. He had told her that her voice reached him in Mulcher's Hotel, and her little gift of the cameo seemed a ray

of hope in a time of miserable loneliness and dejection. This touched Blanche's more generous sensibilities; her eyes filled as she looked at the clock striking eight, nine, ten, with expectant half-hours, and no Rockwell Cocks came.

Blanche would have sent to his mother's rooms in the hotel; but Mrs. Pierman prevented.

"No; let him find us," she said, with dignity.

The Nouvel Opéra was crowded; delicate dresses filled the golden boxes beneath the chandeliers of myriad jets, or flowed out into the *foyer* and balcony; steps went and came on the superb marble stairways with their carved balustrades and statues, but Blanche Pierman's rose-clad form was not among them. Music rose and fell on the ear in sweetest harmonies; the ballet gathered in prismatic grottoes, grouped, hovered, and separated like softly falling petals of variegated blossoms; and Rockwell Cocks did not survey them through his lorgnette.

"I hope no accident has happened," said Mrs. Pierman, withdrawing her gloves at half-past ten.

She was singularly patient in this trying ordeal; but, then, the culprit was Rockwell Cocks. Blanche sat with her face buried in her hands. She was heart-sick of every thing in the sudden transition of disappointment.

"There, there, go to bed, child; and don't tell your father until this is explained."

Mrs. Pierman kissed and left her; Blanche went to bed soberly, mechanically. Miss Nancy's words reverted to her mind—"Some time you will be sorry for what you have done." What had she done? Oh, how much more attractive to contemplate was Howard Denby's noble, handsome face than the round, fat countenance of Rockwell Cocks!

The Paris night brought to her wakeful ear all those sharp sounds peculiar to a people who never seem to sleep: bursts of wild song, and the almost perpetual roll of carriage-wheels, succeeded by swish of laborers' brooms at three o'clock, the clatter of wooden *sabots* on the pavement, and shrill nasal songs. Labor met revelry face to face in the dawn.

Over on the other bank of the river stood the old Hôtel Cluny, ivy-grown and still, day putting to flight its ghosts, as it brought slumber to weary, unrefreshed eyelids.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE DOME OF THE PANTHEON.

ROCKWELL COCKS awakened at twelve o'clock the next morning to a realization of the situation, and his mood was far from being an enviable one. His head was heavy, his eyes suffused, his lips dry, and he had a very confused recollection of the means whereby he had reached his hotel. Unfortunately, after the night's dissipation comes always the calm, pure, avenging morning. The stings of conscience would not afflict heavily the man of fashion, Rockwell Cocks, who was used to late hours; and he minded not a bit the reproving tones of that fond and indulgent guardian, his mother. Here was a new phase in the situation, however, and his first waking thought was resentment at the curb put upon his pleasures. Mrs. Pierman might frown, and her husband take him to task, for any thing he cared. If a man might not enjoy himself in Paris, where would he choose a field? But the sweet, reproachful image of Blanche he dared not contemplate, and in this remorse he hated her, longed to push her out of his path by any means. He had promised to take her to the Opera, and had broken the engagement to dine and sup with a great actress.

"Confound the witch! I believe she kept me on purpose to make mischief," he muttered, visions of the celebrated hostess standing on the table at three o'clock in the morning, and singing a song, wine-glass in hand, rising before his bewildered brain. "I told her that she would make her fortune over again in America, and so she will."

The hours had been merry, the company gay, the wine very potent, and the siren was one of those developments of modern *opéra bouffe* whose celebrity for audacity, success, and sparkling wickedness makes it an honor for a young man to be added to her train of admirers. Yes, she was old and small and undeniably fat, but princes applauded her most reckless wink, and Rockwell Cocks could not fail to be flattered by an invitation to dine with her. She had carried him off in that superb carriage Blanche saw so invitingly opened; had afterward alternately startled and amused him by her sprightly conversation; had detained him willfully, capriciously, perhaps to punish a grand duke among her slaves, until the hour for opera was long past, and it was too late to apologize even to Blanche for his neglect.

All for a fat little woman, *passé* and worn, who cared not a pin whether he went or came, and would toss him out like a flower beneath her carriage-wheels when his usefulness was spent; in this very careless insolence a fascination—a creature, apart from her reputation for wealth and having planted her satin slipper on the neck of the world, to whom homage could no longer be paid on other score than matronly charms, if even these existed. The fellows at home would consider it a "big thing" to have thus

danced attendance on the siren; seen her in her own hotel, where gold had been lavished in decorations; beheld her spring on her own table, as nimble and graceful as at sixteen, and stand amidst a *débris* of broken china and glass to sing her droll song. It would be something to laugh over with his mother, always his confidante, and the tolerant judge of misdemeanors, only for this teasing little goad of duty unfulfilled to Blanche.

Doubly spicy and piquant the sin of stealing hours away in naughty company, when he should have been listening to Mrs. Pierman's tiresome urbanity in an opera-box. Doubly irksome Blanche's little silken fetter of bondage, that it meant restraint in the future, a curb on his own selfish indulgence.

"I wish I had never got into the boat at all," he said, savagely, and looked at himself in the glass.

Yes, the night had brutalized him. The reflected face was coarser, lowering, as if a heavy hand had passed over it, blurring any of the finer lines which might have belonged to childhood. The mouth sneered back at him.

"All the same, I wish I had not slighted the little girl! I look devilish seedy, and no mistake, like one of those drunken satyrs in Rome. Pshaw! I am not a sentimental school-girl. I must write her some fib."

But the fibs did not please him. Several were written and torn up, while he partook of that beverage mentioned by the Young Lady on shipboard, brandy-and-soda. He ordered an exquisite basket of flowers, stated he would call on his dearest girl at four o'clock, and played with his breakfast, somewhat restored to good-humor. A message from his mother reminded him of a promise to take her up to the Pantheon dome that day. Rockwell groaned, and lighted his cigar.

"Here goes for lecture number one!"

But his mother did not lecture him as she kissed him. She had heard of his non-appearance the previous evening, and had apologized for him in advance. In her weakness, she dreaded to lose her hold on his confidence, and this only son was all she possessed in the world.

If Mrs. Cocks had scolded instead of kissing Rockwell that morning, it might have made a difference with his whole after-life. She only looked at him, and was silent. She was amiable, and disliked disputes. Perhaps he would tell her where he had been, if she were tolerant and accessible. In ten minutes he had done so, not without humor, and Mrs. Cocks concealed her horror —if she felt any — unaware that her son found in her a contrast to the rule of all womankind.

"Help me out of the scrape, like a good soul," he petitioned, patting the soft roll of white hair above his mother's face.

"I am sure that she will forgive you," said Mrs. Cocks, incautiously.

Then they started for the Pantheon in harmonious mood, the lady glad to have her boy all to herself, and prepared to drop cautious hints, like good seed by the way, concerning actresses and Paris life, worded carefully not to offend him.

At twelve o'clock, another young man, who had been rambling about the city for hours, stood before the great cameo in the Bibliothéque Nationale. He had passed in listless mood the old and gloomy building, former palace of Cardinal Mazarin, powerful minister of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV., now vaunting a better fame in its books, which would cover sixteen miles in a line, and paused at the door of the Cabinet des Medailles et Antiques.

Here was the sardonyx, largest in the world, nearly a foot in diameter, and revealing the apotheosis of Augustus, the figures of Æneas, Julius Cæsar, Drusus, Tiberius, Livia, Germanicus, Agrippina, and Caligula, beautifully designed. The young man studied the contents of the cases so long, and in such motionless silence, that he seemed profoundly interested: in reality, he saw nothing. He would have scorned to reveal the workings of his own mind, the emotions of his own soul, with Indian stoicism. He was pale, a trifle worn about the eyes, but in outward aspect perfectly calm. He forced himself to go about, finding a certain refuge from self in motion.

When he had quit Blanche Pierman in the chapel of the Cluny yesterday, after that outburst of passion in which he had cursed his successful rival, he was shaken with ungovernable rage from head to foot. He had rushed down the stairway without a thought of Anne Boleyn, and out into the garden, maddened with himself and the world under the unexpected blow of Blanche's refusal. Presumptuous fool that he was, to suppose matters could ever be otherwise! How had he been led on from vague aspiring to foolish hope, by the kindly sympathy, eloquently suggestive of those things which he did not dare to breathe in his own inner ear, of silly Miss Nancy Hawse.

> "To be wroth with one we love
> Doth work like madness in the brain."

He cast Blanche to the winds — a toy, a pretty baby — in haughty contempt of her choice; and in his heart, even at that black moment, he did not blame her. She had done nothing but follow the creed of her school; she was the fragile reed bowing to wind of circumstances.

A boy in the garden drew back instinctively, and looked up at him with the frowning, intent scrutiny of precocious childhood.

The artist, sketching the Roman arch, suffered his pencil to remain idle while studying him. These circumstances, trifling enough, recalled him; the fashion of his face must have changed, become disfigured. If he had been a woman, he would have prayed, "Let me die!" He was a man, and no thought of rash self-destruction occurred to him. A first impulse was to stop and drain one of those absinthe glasses, thus drowning misery; a second, to flee out into the country away from it all. Howard Denby always turned away from his own kind in moments of trouble. The instinct may have been inherited from his sensitive mother, who had hidden, turned aside shrinking, from even casual glances so many years.

Checking both inclinations, he had chosen a sheltered nook of the Luxembourg garden, and every thing around him became a dream —music, the neighboring palace, the groups of towns-people out with their offspring. You will see nowhere such self-absorbed, lonely figures as are to be found in a city park. Howard Denby was one of these, as he sat there turning the matter over in his mind. Of all the trials he had encountered, and he fancied them mountainous afflictions, this one was the most insupportable and crushing. He had never loved before. He was scarcely aware of how Blanche Pierman had crept into his heart, and imbued his whole nature, until he had met Miss Nancy, and received the tiny gift from her hands. Some exalted hope had swept through him that night in the rigging, as if the tempest had touched vibrating harp-strings, that he was the destined protector in life and death of the fair creature clinging to him.

That was all over; and Rockwell Cocks had won what he should miss all his life. He had cursed his former friend to her face, like a brute; and of that ebullition he was ashamed.

A man touched him on the shoulder; he glanced up indifferently. The sun was gone, the breeze cool, the gates about to close. He went out into the crowd with a sense of cold loneliness upon him, and the conviction that his dead mother alone would understand him in his miserable need. Why had he come here at all? The rebuff wounded his pride intensely, as well as the conviction that he had played the fool. Just as Howard could not behold himself through the medium of Blanche's eyes in the shrewd yet pensive criticism with which she had measured him, so Blanche could not appreciate, from the barren poverty of his previous life, what a presence she became, idealized by his newly kindled fancy. La Reine Blanche visited his dreams that night, haunting the dim chamber in trailing white robes, and receding before him beneath the narrow window of the chapel with the altar ever between them.

In the morning he had gone to Miss Nancy's *pension*, then turned away from the door, ashamed of the weakness of seeking her sympathy. That evening he would cross again to England, and take up his burden of work once more.

Having forced himself to study the cameo, he made a circuit of the rooms. The cup of Chosroes I., composed of medallions in rock-crystal, and colored glass framed in gold, glittered in the light; the silver disk known as the "Bouclier de Scipion," with reliefs representing the restoration of Briseis to Achilles by the messengers of Agamemnon, lured him to read its label, which revealed that it was found in the Rhone, near Avignon, in 1658. Here were curious historical portraits on medals. Marie de' Medici, with ruff inclosing her throat like a wheel; Anne of Austria, and her little boy, Louis XIV.; cardinals, popes, warriors, and heroes, all ranged in neat cases entirely without reference to their personal dislikes while living. A gold diadem from an Athenian tomb; an ivory vase mounted in silver, with a cavalry battle on the side; the agate cup of the Ptolemies tracing the mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus; a sword of a knight of Malta; images from the Temple of Mercury at Canetium, discovered near Berthonville, all claimed his attention. Antique *intagli* of the most exquisite work, from minute specimens where a tiny Flora led her train of maidens, to larger, bolder carvings of richest hues, vied with the cameos clouded like soft mist, or black as night with pale forms drifting across the surface.

"I should like that one," thought Howard, with a half smile.

The Apollo, lithe, slender, delicate-limbed, bent his bow with more than mortal aim, and the arrow sped to the mark. There was no supine weakness here, no droop in discouraged inaction; even the fragile form so perfectly outlined against an amber background was instinct with the purpose and power of a god.

Howard Denby went away thoughtfully. Over here a man might spend his life in collecting *intagli* and medals—fascinating pursuit. So one is given the axe wherewith to hew a way in the virgin forest; to another the engraver's tool in the shop of his forefathers. His footsteps led him across the river once more. He surveyed the Hôtel Cluny standing amidst its trees, without nearer approach; he again seated himself in the Luxembourg garden.

The cheerful activity of morning was all about him. This time his eyes did not seek the ground, and the Pantheon rose above him, its massive parapet and dome dwarfing all surrounding structures.

"I believe that I will climb up there," said Howard Denby, also moving toward the goal.

At twelve o'clock, Miss Nancy, also in sombre mood after the events of the preceding day, stood in the Luxembourg galleries.

She had waited until that hour in hopes of seeing Howard Denby, but he had not called; and she also had escaped out-of-doors from her own unpleasant thoughts. Of the trio who had played at cross-purposes in the Hôtel Cluny yesterday, perhaps Miss Nancy was the most crest-fallen, because the total collapse of her own self-confidence had been so complete and humiliating. She was responsible for having fostered the young man's hopes, and for having been blinded by her own preference to the other interests of Blanche Pierman. She had led him on to commit himself when the mortification of rejection was so unnecessary.

"If you could ever learn to mind your own business, Nancy Hawes," she soliloquized, and called herself very hard names all the evening.

The scent of box came through the open windows from the garden, where Howard Denby had sat all the previous afternoon, and was now sitting, had she but known it; the great Medici fountain glistened in the sunbeams, which converted bronze to gold, at the head of the broad alley. Through a grated gate and glass partition was visible the grand stairway of the palace where Josephine Beauharnais suffered imprisonment, Danton and Robespierre were held captives, and Rubens, in 1621, designed the series of large pictures in the Louvre—most gorgeous idealization of the career of a bad woman, Marie de' Medici—afterward finished in Antwerp with the aid of his pupils. French art in all its beauty was before her and around her.

Diana stepped forth with ivory limbs of those delicate hues which seem to etherealize and refine the mere perfection of flesh, and held aloft a moon in the black heavens; Abd-el-Kader's fine face looked out from white burnous draperies with serious dignity; in Giraud's dance at the Grenada Posada, the girl's yellow-satin dress shimmered with a soft sheen, her dark eyes flashed, the tinkle of castanets was almost audible. Priests stood in silent contemplation of saints, absorbed in ecstasy of devotion. A Christ of benign and sweet aspect received the Judas kiss, surrounded by mysterious darkness.

Two pictures greeted Miss Nancy like old familiar friends. Wood-cuts of them, framed in straw and pine-cones, hung on the wall of the best parlor at home in Briarbush: Muller's "Reign of Terror" in original force and power, despair ranging over the whole field of human expression, from the beautiful woman who starts up electrified at the mention of her name on the dreaded roll, to the resignation on the wrinkled, delicate face, like the heads painted on the Sèvres porcelain, of the old *marquise* who, with folded hands, gazes beyond the life seemingly so full of promise to her companions; and Virginia cast upon the shore, limp, drowned, the great green wave sweeping in already creaming over in a feathery crest of foam to claim her once more.

A little old man was copying the Pandora in the corner, and stepped back to survey his very perfect reproduction critically just as Miss Nancy approached.

Pandora, young and innocent, with softly hovering rainbow wings, and a faint radiance shed from above on her fair head, holding her unopened casket, walked a new world peopled with dim shapes.

A cow on ice is supposed to be a peculiarly ludicrous object. Shade of Mr. Winkle, strapped in skates, and launched on the pond, terrified by the vagaries of your own extremities! could the helplessness of man or quadruped exceed that of Miss Nancy on the waxed floor of the Luxembourg galleries, which extended in long avenues of glassy surface, with an occasional grateful island of marble or oasis of rug intervening? Once she had essayed to admire a fresco, and had caught a railing only in time to prevent her measuring her length on the floor; twice had she slidden gracefully on her knees on the very brink of a vase worth its weight in gold. These alarms made her nervous, flushed, anxious; she adopted a crab-like movement by holding her feet together, and scuffled slowly from room to room.

The little old man drew back to inspect his finished work, when Miss Nancy, with surprising skill, swooped over, caught her dress on the easel, and came to the ground, with the Pandora reposing on top of her in a swift and awful ruin of color-box, brushes, and canvas. What need to describe the confusion, dismay, and burning shame of our traveler, or the rage of the little old man, who hopped about in transports of demonstrative Gallic wrath as she sat on the floor, Pandora's fresh and lively coloring transferred, for the most part, to her own gown? They came from the east and from the west, from dark door-ways, through the very floor perhaps, in swarms—these mouthing foreigners—to gaze at her, artists, fellow-tourists, and guards. In all the cruel mob, who regarded her as of some strange, barbaric species, there was only one Samaritan, a lady artist with certain preraphaelite tendencies in her costume, and her hair dressed in a gentlemanly style.

"You did not intend to do it, did you?" she said, assisting Miss Nancy to her feet, and wiping some of Pandora's complexion from her dress with a painting-rag.

The language of the spheres must be English. Never did that tongue sound so mel-

lifluous to dazed and bewildered senses as when it fell on Miss Nancy's ear.

"Oh, I am so sorry, and the picture is ruined! Would you mind telling him?" with a deprecating glance at the fiery little old man. "I suppose it would do no good to put me in prison, or whip me as I deserve for my clumsiness."

It was mortifying the flesh indeed to endure longer that battery of curious staring, but she forced herself to take the little man's card, to inquire the price of Pandora meekly.

"If I could only buy it! Two thousand francs—I dare not spend so much money," she sighed, and escaped from the scene of her disgrace as speedily as possible.

The Pantheon rose before her, vast, cool, a temple where the Convention wrote over the portico, "*Aux grands hommes la patrie reconnaissante;*" and sculptured St. Genevieve implores Attila, the Hun, to spare the good city of Paris below. Mirabeau once slept beneath this marble pavement. Marat was placed here after his murder by Charlotte Corday, and then thrown into the sewer of the Rue Montmartre. The reliquary borne by bronze angels over the side altar had a sprinkling of worshipers at this hour.

"I wonder if I shall be afraid to go up alone," said Miss Nancy, and laughed at such cowardice, for her ticket had been accepted, and the door had clanged after her entrance.

She would like to climb to some height, and survey her late folly at her leisure. Did a traveler ever skate into a picture before? she wondered. The last strain of fatigue may be imposed on weary muscle by the ascent to the Pantheon dome. Miss Nancy felt an indolent desire to seat herself on the parapet, sufficiently lofty for an extensive view, and sternly conquered such irresolution by dashing up the next flight which scaled the outside of the dome without pausing for breath, or to change her mind. The interior was very dark and still, with odd corners and half-concealed iron doors in the angles of the wall.

No sound of voices broke the silence. Was she alone in the great place? Who would come up next? Her heart beat very loud with rapid movement; she seated herself on the stair to rest.

In the mean while Mrs. Cocks, with leisurely effort, had climbed to the ball, panting a little on the last steps, and assisted by her son.

"Three more, and here you are!" cried Rockwell, with recovered gayety; and, as he appeared on the last landing, he came face to face with Howard Denby.

"Halloo, Denby, old fellow! how are you?" he exclaimed.

Howard Denby recoiled, and grasped his cane more tightly in his hand. The impulse to strike the broad, smiling face before him was almost irresistible. Just then Mrs. Cocks's head appeared, her cheeks suffused, and two ready little hands extended.

"You dear boy! so glad to see you," she panted.

"I suppose you must have rained down from the moon last," added Rockwell, carelessly.

He was fairly caught, must smile, and chat with the man he hated above all other human creatures, in the presence of the amiable, unconscious mother. Some persons are always amiable, because they imagine the universe was made for them, and all others of their kind must minister to their wants, the poor young man reflected, in blackest mood, and then came a strange reaction of feeling. Rockwell was jocose, friendly, also unconscious of his deadly enmity. Was Rockwell to blame for having thwarted him in ignorance of his love for Blanche Pierman? He chafed under Mrs. Cocks's pleasant conversation; Rockwell's vicinity made him uncomfortable. If the depths of his own soul were suddenly revealed to these companions, they would start back amazed at the shapes haunting that gulf. The perplexing doubt would assail him, like a thorn-prick, that Blanche preferred Rockwell; but could he have won her for himself, if left without a rival?

"How nice it is to have the place all to ourselves!" said Mrs. Cocks, in her purring voice.

Paris was spread before them, bearing a droll resemblance to those towns of blocks which children build into squares, with paper trees between. It was also like a vast system revealed where the generous arteries are visible beneath the daylight, and the narrow, dark veins, productive of disease, wind among the poisonous, decaying streets of the old quarter, celebrated for violence.

Miss Nancy Hawse suddenly appeared, flushed and breathing rapidly, her dress showing curious stains of yellow and pink which might have been imparted by paint. Her color was not lessened by discovering the occupants of the dome. At the sight of Mrs. Cocks the interview in the Langham Hotel, when she restored Tommy Pierman to his family, rose painfully, vividly, before her mind. Howard Denby would not more gladly have put the entire length of Paris between the Cockses and himself than would Miss Nancy at that moment. Was she to explain to the great lady, once Miss Bagatelle, that she had just upset a picture, to the ruin of her gown and the defacement of the work of art? Never! She returned Mrs. Cocks's affable greeting with a forced smile, and was very stiff to Mrs. Cocks's son; then turned, with a sense of relief, to Howard Denby.

"Come and dine with us to-night, Denby,

and I will show you the lions afterward," said Rockwell.

"Thank you; I cross to Dover this evening," replied Howard, hastily.

"I suppose you will never be my boy again," said Mrs. Cocks, half wistfully. "At least, you can drive with us an hour, and we will drop you at your hotel in ample time for the train."

Miss Nancy heard this proposal with growing alarm. Good heavens! these two young men were rivals, and she had made them so. If they met, and quarreled, the result would be on her conscience. At the risk of being intrusive, she must keep them apart.

"Pardon me, but I hope you have not forgotten your promise to visit Père la Chaise with me," she interposed, anxiously.

Poor Miss Nancy had taken every one's burden on herself. She was aware that Mrs. Cocks regarded her questioningly, almost suspiciously; that ready fun lighted up Rockwell's small, twinkling eyes.

What did they think of her? She cared nothing for Père la Chaise. Perhaps they imagined that she had fallen in love with Howard Denby herself.

The young man thus contested for smiled brightly, and the clouds cleared from his face.

"I will go where you are good enough to take me," he said, gratefully, to Mrs. Cocks; "and Miss Hawse will allow me to call on her afterward, perhaps."

He looked at her re-assuringly as he spoke, but Miss Nancy was scarcely satisfied with the result. When Mrs. Cocks invited her to join the party, thus combining Howard's two engagements in one, she submitted to the martyrdom for the result to be attained. Again did Rockwell Cocks devote himself with airy *sang-froid* to the school-marm; he insisted upon entertaining her personally, and becoming her escort in the cemetery, while his mother won more and more on Howard Denby's savage humor, softening his wrath almost to remorse by her gentleness. This time Rockwell was quits with Miss Nancy. He had gained Blanche in the race when on board the *Acis* she had stood in his way, proud of her own cleverness in foiling him.

When Mrs. Cocks bid Miss Nancy farewell at her *pension* door, Howard Denby joined her. She had dropped a little card on the pavement, which he restored. The card bore the name of the copyist of Pandora: M. ANTOINE HOSCHEDÉ, 14 Rue St. Georges.

"I should have been sorry to lose this card," she said. "Perhaps if I look steadily at it, my wish may come to pass, and another time I will give you the story."

"If there ever is another time," retorted Howard, soberly. "Well, I must go back again to duty. Miss Hawse, they have agreed to take up my work in England. That is a step in the right direction."

"God speed you, then!" returned Miss Nancy, with tears gathering in her eyes as she held his hand in parting. "Try to think as charitably of me as possible: I meant it all for the best. You are not to blame her, my dear. Those were her last words."

"I blame neither of you," he said, huskily.

"I would mend matters if I could. Rely on me for that," she added, as he turned away.

The pain in his face followed her, troubled her beyond measure, and she could do absolutely nothing.

There was a heap of luggage on the landing. Mrs. Sharpe laid her hands on Miss Nancy's shoulders, and kissed her heartily.

"I am right glad to see you again. Paris is a pretty place."

This was the nearest approach to praise the lady had yet bestowed on Europe.

At four o'clock Blanche Pierman looked out of the hotel window, her heart beating nervously, her hands cold. She had been very willful and perverse all day, refusing to eat, to go out-of-doors, scarcely glancing at the basket of flowers sent by her recreant lover. Mrs. Pierman was patient and indulgent. She smoothed away all difficulties with her husband, and petted Blanche, her own mood cheerful and encouraging. A young man might meet friends unexpectedly, as Rockwell said, and find it impossible to break away from them. The proof that the slight was not premeditated was that he had written no excuse in advance. Blanche had listened in silence. One could not divine what was passing in the girl's brain. At last she had suffered the maid to dress her in a color becoming her present pallor, and stood by the window listlessly gazing down on the boulevard.

A young man passing in an open carriage, his portmanteau beside him, glanced at her window as if by intuition, caught her smile of recognition, and was gone.

Four o'clock, and Rockwell Cocks stood opposite, talking with a group of young men, glancing up and down the street, yawning occasionally and laughing.

"He does not care," thought Blanche, proudly.

Presently he consulted his watch, nodded to his acquaintances, and crossed the street. The blood rushed to the girl's temples and forehead. With one glance around the *salon*, she ran into her own room and locked the door.

"I will not see him!" she cried, and her mother found her lying again on the sofa, her pretty toilet disarranged, and her hair hanging in disheveled masses over her face.

More was involved in this letting-down of her hair than Blanche imagined, or any of

them could divine. Despite Mrs. Pierman's smooth excuses, Rockwell Cocks went away offended. The attempt to please his lady-love was becoming very irksome indeed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A WHITE HORSE.

In the first place, the carriage was dusty and dilapidated, and the *cocher* had but one eye, which may have blinded him to the defects of his steed; for certainly these disadvantages, apparent in a casual inspection, were as nothing to the gradual revelations concerning that horse. For a quarter of a mile chronic lameness seemed confined to the right fore foot, when the limp was abruptly transferred to both hind feet. His thigh-bones became painful facts, visible above the rim of dash-board, like the serrated peaks of a mountain range; his spectral flanks seemed unnaturally elongated in the darkness of night, as if fasting during the siege had become habitual afterward; and, far in advance, a sharp and battered head jerked spasmodically on a lean neck, as if about to separate from the sorry body, with the tremulous motion of a toy donkey on wheels. But we anticipate, to use the conventional formula of novelists.

Mrs. Sharpe stood on the curbstone at ten o'clock with a shawl over her arm. Verily the subtle fluid of Parisian activity must have already infused her veins, for she had traveled from Calais that day, and, instead of going to bed like a sober-minded, elderly Christian, had taken a nap in her chair, and proposed briskly to see the city by gas-light before retiring.

"Will this carriage do?" inquired Mr. Vidal, dubiously.

"Of course it will do," replied his mother-in-law, "if all the double ones are engaged. You just drive ahead, Richard, and we will follow. Where is Miss Hawse?"

Miss Hawse, thus claimed somewhat impatiently, appeared hastily on the pavement, and announced herself ready for the expedition. The cause of her delay, if the whole truth must be told, was, as usual, interest in the affairs of her neighbors. On her way down-stairs she had discovered that the *concierge* was relaxing the onerous duties of his office by a dinner party in his little room, given to a select number of ladies and gentlemen of the neighboring shops. Savory odors still lingered about the small fire visible through the open door beyond; the *concierge* was claiming the attention of his male guests for a parting glass of choice wine, while the ladies had already retired to that favorite drawing-room of the Paris workwoman—the sidewalk.

Much has been said about this tyrant, the *concierge*, and his exercise of petty authority in a post of power which has spoiled him. Accused of subserviency to *monsieur le baron, au premier étage;* bullying madame, *au seconde*, if her perquisites are not satisfactory; assuming a menacing attitude to the whole household if the New-year's is not considered sufficiently remunerative, the *concierge* is the landlord's prime minister, and not wholly above the corruption of bribery.

Miss Nancy was glad to see him enjoying the company of his friends. He was to her observation a pale, slender man, omnipresent, whether in blue apron, of a morning, waxing floors and brushing steps, or appearing at the great door during all hours of night, when late pleasure-seekers chose to arouse him.

"Richard will go in advance, and we can follow," said Mrs. Sharpe. "You do not mind an old white horse at night, I hope?"

"Oh dear, no," returned Miss Nancy, recklessly; "I should not care if we went in a wheelbarrow. Nobody will notice us, I am sure."

"Besides, we shall only take a turn on the boulevards, you know. It seems wicked to sleep on such a night as this," Mrs. Sharpe supplemented, with considerable animation.

Then the white horse started at the rate of locomotion previously alluded to, with limp and halt and occasional rattlings in his harness of most ominous sound.

"This seems to be quite a wonderful beast. I only hope he will not tumble all to pieces before we get him home again," the elder lady remarked, apprehensively, and put on her spectacles.

Mr. and Mrs. Vidal, in a better conveyance, with a green lamp glimmering like a fire-fly in advance, occasionally called the attention of the others to passing objects.

Miss Nancy laughed. It was droll to hear Mrs. Sharpe make the same comment on the night which she had done in her impulsive maidenhood on the old porch at Briarbush, where grandmother's roses bloomed so many years ago. She had declared that it was wicked to sleep through such nights, as she came into the house, closing the door with emphasis which merged in a slam. This evening was not unlike the other one, very warm, balmy, clear, with the full moon illuminating the city roofs and the tree-tops. Like, and yet what a difference!

The village had slept, white and still, in the embrace of the hills, Nature's mantle of repose infolding all her children; the rocky crags had caught a halo of glory from the moonshine; a fleet of thin clouds had floated across the heavens like an argosy of wishes. So many, many years ago!

St. Roch was visible in the darkness of narrow streets, with its broad flight of steps where Napoleon I. planted cannon to drive

back the Royalists. The Palais Royale glittered with garlands of gas-jets. The Tuileries became a classical ruin touched by the wand of night, shattered, sad, and desolate, yet with all defects veiled in obscurity. The Place de la Concorde was one wide expanse of lights like frosted silver. A star shot across the sky and faded. There sat the stone sisterhood of cities, bathed in the mellow radiance, where the Prussian troops had bivouacked, where the Communist frenzy had raged, and where now Mrs. Sharpe and Nancy were drawn by the white horse.

"Well, it is a pretty place!" exclaimed Mrs. Sharpe from time to time, and her pleasure occasionally took the form of short laughs, succeeded by intervals of quiet when her spectacles twinkled observantly in the moonlight. Beyond lay that realm of summer enchantment, the Champs Élysées. The *cafés chantants* seen through the trees resembled the palaces of "The Arabian Nights," domes, pillars, and the very walls gleaming with tinted fire, and connected like the links of a chain, spanning intervening darkness with garlands, arrows, and arches of globes among the shrubbery. What multitudes of pleasure-seekers were gathered along this space, seated about the *cafés*, or moving like restless shadows!

Now a singer's voice claimed supremacy; again an orchestra drowned the hum of conversation; or the clash of glass chimes sprinkled the air with crisp and not unmelodious sounds.

"Oh, what is that?" cried Mrs. Sharpe.

A shaft of intense radiance suddenly changed semi-darkness to noonday; the Arc de l'Étoile rose above them in massive grandeur, each sculptured bass-relief visible; farther down, the Genius of France in bronze upheld the dying soldier; the Palais d'Industrie caught the unwonted glare on every prism of its glass; all the tinted globes grew dim, fading to a sickly yellow hue in the bluish pallor of the more powerful illumination. Only a trick of effect, the movement of a calcium-light which streamed across space, the trees and shrubs seeming to shrivel and turn gray; the fountains, blanched to feathery mist; increasing, dazzling, diminishing, and then vanishing as suddenly as it came.

Miss Nancy stood up in the carriage.

"What has become of Mr. Vidal? I don't see the green lamp anywhere," she said.

"Ask the driver," insisted Mrs. Sharpe, so quickly that Miss Nancy's tongue refused its office. Haste acted on her linguistic faculties like a cork thrust into a bottle.

Mrs. Sharpe poked the *cocher* in the back. Thus assailed, he reined in the white horse, and, revolving slowly on the box, brought his one eye to bear on his fare.

"No, no, don't stop, or we shall lose them," said Mrs. Sharpe, impatiently, and effectually drowning Miss Nancy's first effort at speech.

"What do you wish, ladies?" inquired the driver, stolidly.

The white horse had settled on one side at an alarming angle, as if with the intention of lying down, or at least taking a nap, on the spot.

"Where is the other carriage?" inquired Miss Nancy, hurriedly.

"There it is, madame," pointing with his whip.

"Well, drive fast, if you please."

"I am afraid in such a crowd of carriages that we may lose them," observed Mrs. Sharpe. "However, Richard knows where to go."

"The driver also knows; he can recognize the other vehicle better than we can. Was not Mrs. Vidal's hat white straw, with a long white feather?" inquired Miss Nancy.

"Yes—a cavalier hat."

"Then she is directly in front of us," said Miss Nancy, re-assuringly. "Look at the Arch from this side, Mrs. Sharpe."

"Ye-es; but what makes him go so fast?"

"Why, the other carriage is going faster, and he knows our anxiety to keep together," returned Miss Nancy, calmly.

The driver had indeed whipped the white horse unmercifully, and was going beyond the Arch at a considerably increased rate of speed; the other carriage was rolling swiftly and smoothly in advance, with Mrs. Vidal's snowy feather as a guide. Thus spurred on, the white steed behaved in the most extraordinary manner, now bounding in the air, now breaking into an absurd canter like a hobby-horse, now shaking the harness menacingly, as if about to cast it off altogether.

"It seems cruel to goad on the poor animal. I wonder where they are going? If we could get sufficiently near, I would ask Mrs. Vidal." This from Miss Nancy, again standing up in the carriage to survey the situation.

"*Cocher!*" she implored.

"Driver!" from Mrs. Sharpe.

Thus appealed to a second time, the driver reined up, and revolved slowly on the box.

"Que voulez-vous, mesdames?"

The white horse settled on one side immediately, as if glad that the recent jest of rapid locomotion was over.

"Perhaps he thinks us a little cracked," suggested Mrs. Sharpe, *sotto voce*.

Miss Nancy burst into irrepressible laughter.

"Don't be silly!" urged her companion; "especially as I can not speak one word of French."

"Driver, where are you going?"

The driver's shoulders went up over his ears in a ready shrug.

"Really, madame, I don't know," pointing to the carriage in advance, protestingly.

"But—" began Miss Nancy.

"Don't stand still, for mercy's sake! We are losing sight of them already," interposed Mrs. Sharpe.

The energy of her pantomimic gestures needed no translation.

Again the driver thrashed the white horse, and again the white horse plunged madly forward. It was no time for inactive parleying. Mrs. Vidal's feather had almost ceased to be a guide, and neither herself nor her husband manifested the slightest interest in their unfortunate companions.

"Really, this is inconsiderate. Richard knew that we only put up with this shabby concern for a little turn on the boulevards. We seem to be going out of town altogether. Miss Hawse, you have been here longer than I have—where *are* we going?"

"I am sure I don't know. Perhaps Mr. Vidal wishes to see the fortifications—by moonlight," ventured Miss Nancy, in perplexity.

"I have always heard that young things lose their heads in Paris," said Mrs. Sharpe, becoming snappish. "Do try and hail them; beg them to stop."

Thus urged, Miss Nancy for the third time stood up in the carriage, and sighted the white feather.

"Mr. Vidal—l—"

The only effect of this signal of distress was to make the white horse stop as if smitten by enchantment, and the driver to revolve on his box for further orders. Mr. Vidal evidently did intend to see the fortifications by moonlight; nay, more, the fortifications were already left behind with the music, the gay crowds, the illuminated thoroughfares, and that gigantic portal, the Arc de l'Étoile, while before them lay a broad, fine road and the more shadowy expanse of suburbs sheltered in clustering foliage.

"We might stop here, and all go to sleep until they return," said Mrs. Sharpe, with grim humor.

"They may drive around another way," demurred Miss Nancy.

"Go on, then," said Mrs. Sharpe, with the resignation of despair.

"We could not return home alone?" said Miss Nancy.

"No; Richard said he would manage this trip. Let him."

The calmness of Mrs. Sharpe's manner while uttering these words boded ill for her son-in-law in the future. The driver here became aroused to lively animation of speech and gesture; he poured a volley of rapid explanations at the ladies, which they did not in the least understand, and concluded by gathering up the reins, and urging the white horse once more to speed.

"I thought you spoke French," observed Mrs. Sharpe, with cutting sarcasm.

"He talks so fast; and I think he has been drinking," said Miss Nancy.

"That is a pleasant suggestion out here in the country! We may be murdered, and Richard would not care—racing ahead like that. Perhaps he thinks it a good joke."

Richard was undoubtedly racing ahead. The poor white horse ambled after, and the tranquillity of open country was succeeding the noise of the metropolis, the air still sweet with summer flowers, the full moonlight shining on the landscape. Beautiful, balmy, and still, the warm evening lured all creatures out-of-doors. Carriages passed the ladies, sometimes with red lamps, and again with green. They scrutinized the occupants eagerly and in vain.

"I should fear that we had made some mistake, if it were not for Emma's hat. I know that anywhere," said Mrs. Sharpe. "This looks like a nice retired spot for highwaymen, or a Communist out of business."

They were in the Bois de Boulogne now, as Miss Nancy pointed out to her companion, who expressed a preference to see the place by daylight. The little lakes spread pure and silvery surfaces on which the moonbeams rippled; laughter floated across from the islands.

"Thank goodness, they have stopped!" exclaimed Miss Nancy, a prey to manifold anxieties in leaving the city behind.

"Cocher, allez plus vite, je vous prie."

The first carriage had stopped on the brink of the lake. Mr. Vidal removed his hat to permit the air to fan his brow; Mrs. Vidal, gazing at the water, warbled a gay little song. The white horse, with a ludicrous effort at style imparted by the driver's whip, drew up beside the other carriage at last.

"Mr. Vidal!" from Miss Nancy.

"Oh, Richard, what made you lead our spectral steed such a dance?" from Mrs. Sharpe.

A chilling inattention on the part of the pursued ones was manifested. Mrs. Vidal continued her song almost insolently; Mr. Vidal inquired, thickly,

"What d'yer want, go-o-d people?"

Perhaps the first thing noticed by Miss Nancy was the coat-tail of the other driver: the appendage was studded with glittering buttons, and depended gracefully from the back of the box after the manner of private liveries. Mrs. Sharpe and Miss Nancy looked at each other. *They had followed the wrong carriage!*

The lady with the white feather wore the cavalier hat far more on one side of her head than did Emma Vidal; her face was haggard and old, despite its *rouge*, even in the softening moonlight; there was a sparkle of gems about her throat and bare wrists; but she was graceful in her scarcely repressed amuse-

ment at the disconcerted faces of the two pursuers.

"N'importe, mesdames," she said, graciously.

"O Lord!" gasped Mrs. Sharpe, and became awfully rigid in her corner of the carriage.

"What d' yer want, old la-a-dies?" repeated the gentleman.

The moonlight fell full on the features of Rockwell Cocks, flushed with wine, and his eyes wandering without recognition over Miss Nancy. Horrible, sickening revelation! She was stricken dumb; the very gates of Hades seemed to open before her astonished eyes, underlying this gay, beautiful city. Rockwell Cocks driving out with a frouzy, rouged old woman, and engaged to Blanche Pierman!

She could count the hours since he had been to Père la Chaise with his gentle, amiable mother and Howard Denby. O that poor mother, who believed in him! O simple-minded, trustful Blanche, with his ring on her finger! Before she could recover herself, the other carriage had rolled on and disappeared, and their driver had descended to the ground to inspect the white horse, which showed alarming symptoms of entire dismemberment. The driver said that he was told to follow this carriage, and as his blind eye had been toward the vehicle, argument was useless. He now threw out discouraging suggestions respecting the amount of speed left in the white horse, and grumblingly protested that he had not been engaged with reference to making the tour of the Bois that evening, after the fatigues of a *fête* day.

"Let the white horse crawl back within city limits, if possible, and then we can dismiss this carriage, and choose a better one," said Miss Nancy, soothingly.

"Have you a purse, then?" inquired Mrs. Sharpe.

"Why, no; I—"

"Exactly; I invited you out, and Richard has all the money." Mrs. Sharpe said this with the peculiar satisfaction one feels when convinced that matters can not possibly be worse.

The *cocher* remounted the box, and turned the white horse toward the city once more. Ample leisure there was for reflection as to the cause of Mr. Vidal's disappearance, ample ground for conjecture as to the probabilities of ever getting back to the *pension* by this means. The white horse was having matters his own way at last, and so far from cruel goading, the *cocher* held the reins loosely, and even appeared to doze on the box. The drive was becoming lonely. Every vehicle passed our travelers, leaving them only the more apprehensive and nervous for the desertion. Sometimes the white horse cocked one ear, and they became hopeful that visions of stable would arouse him from the lethargy into which he was sinking, when his head would again droop despondingly, and the promontories of bones become startlingly apparent, divided by a central ridge of spine.

"I suppose you knew the woman we overtook," said Mrs. Sharpe, after an interval of gloomy silence.

"I recognized the young man," returned Miss Nancy, with some hesitation.

"That creature was acting in London, and we went — to improve Emma's French. I never was ashamed of being a woman, and an old one too, before that night. Bless you, the theatre was crowded to witness her vulgarities, because she was a little worse than all the rest; but I came away, I can tell you. I only wonder this Paris is not destroyed, like another Sodom and Gomorrah, with brimstone."

"You are sure this one was the same actress," said Miss Nancy, solemnly, after a pause.

"Sure! I know her painted face by this time. You will see her photograph in every shop, dressed like a page, or a queen."

The wheels creaked in slow revolutions, the white horse paused more than once and sniffed the breeze languidly, as if disposed to roll in the grass and emancipate himself wholly from the trammels of duty; he also coughed in a consumptive fashion. Mrs. Sharpe nudged her companion, and pointed to the *cocher* nodding wearily on the box.

"Perhaps he is not asleep," she whispered, meaningly.

"Poor thing! he seems to be," said Miss Nancy, also regarding him with fresh interest.

"He may have got us out here on purpose," hinted Mrs. Sharpe, darkly.

Miss Nancy jumped, and peered at the trees.

"He may have accomplices waiting for a signal," continued Mrs. Sharpe. "Who would ever know what became of us, two unprotected women?"

Mr. Vidal had approached the Arc de l'Étoile at the moment when the calcium-light produced that weird illumination, and, directing his *cocher* to drive around the structure, was returning on the other side, when his wife exclaimed,

"Why, where is the white horse, Richard?"

"Eh? Following us, of course."

But no white horse was following them; instead, more brown and black horses than the city of Paris could have been expected to muster in procession. There was a white animal half-way down the Champs Élysées, and Mr. Vidal was disposed to be merry over being outstripped by the "walking skeleton," as he termed it, until they overtook the equipage near the Place de la Con-

corde, which proved to be occupied by two gentlemen, who were in consequence disposed to take the most lively interest in Mrs. Vidal's beauty.

"They think we have been following them," giggled the bride, hiding her face on her husband's shoulder.

Then they turned, and went back slowly. The calcium-light had faded, the *cafés* vanished in the darkness one by one, as if the earth had opened and swallowed the fairy palaces, and Mrs. Sharpe did not greet the eyes watching for her. Pale horses did indeed crawl down the thoroughfare nearly as attenuated as the object of their search; but Mrs. Sharpe's spectacles did not twinkle behind them, or Miss Nancy's serene face beam with smiles.

"This is growing awful," said Mrs. Vidal. "Something may have happened to them."

"Pshaw! nothing can have happened. It is twelve o'clock, and they have driven home long ago," said Mr. Vidal.

Mrs. Sharpe was not in the *pension:* the *concierge* affirmed that she had not returned. At half-past twelve o'clock Mr. Vidal was pacing the pavement uneasily, and his wife sat crying in the *concierge's* room, when the creaking of slowly revolving wheels was heard, and the white horse appeared.

There were tears and laughter and explanations in the hall—tears from Mrs. Vidal, laughter from Mr. Vidal, and explanations from Miss Nancy. Mrs. Sharpe alone wore a perfectly stony and unmoved aspect.

"Oblige me by paying the man, Richard," she said, with dignity, and walked upstairs.

Accordingly, Richard paid, and the *cocher* cracked his whip, but the white horse did not move. Miss Nancy was fascinated to peep out at the quadruped from upper halls, still interested in his welfare, and always the white horse stood immovable, as if petrified by fatigue in the last step taken before the door. The painful impression was left on her mind that if the animal gave up the ghost then and there, the fragments were neatly brushed up before morning by a perfect mechanism of municipal government.

Miss Nancy was wrought to a high pitch of excitement by the events of the evening, which had delivered Rockwell Cocks into her hand. She did not retire, late though the hour might be, because she realized that action was required of her before sleep came. Should she slay her enemy unmercifully? Had she any right to interfere in the lives of others?

What if the last reed on the bank were Blanche Pierman, and Rockwell Cocks felt himself already drawn down in the flood with its rapid under-currents—how was she to deliberately cast him off from such slender anchorage of hope? On the other hand, the reed would always grow on the bank, in the sunshine and purity of upper air, while the clutching fingers might only uproot and cause it to disappear in the stream below. How eventful in the history of all their lives would these few days in Paris prove! Only yesterday occurred the meeting between Howard Denby and Blanche in the Hôtel Cluny; and to-night she had seen Rockwell Cocks, with her own eyes, shockingly drunk, and driving with a notorious actress.

Miss Nancy opened her journal, and on the first page was pasted a slip of newspaper once clipped from *The Briarbush Banner*. A newspaper cutting may have a marked influence on a human life. The slip was headed "Happy Arithmetic.—Sydney Smith preserved this maxim for himself: 'When you rise in the morning, form the resolution to make the day a happy one to a fellow-creature. It is easily done: a left-off garment to the man who needs it, a kind word to the sorrowful, an encouraging expression to the striving—trifles in themselves as light as air—will do, at least for the twenty-four hours. If you are young, depend upon it, it will tell for you when you are old; and if you are old, rest assured it will send you gently and happily down the stream of time to eternity. By the most simple arithmetical sum, look at the result: If you send one person away happily through a day, that is three hundred and sixty-five in the course of a year. And suppose you live forty years only after you commence that course of medicine, you will have made fourteen thousand six hundred persons happy, at all events for a time.'" Now, Miss Nancy had consulted this advice, and acted upon it more than once in her humble career, until it began to assume a certain significance in all her movements.

The puzzling question was as to the means of applying it in the present case. Rockwell Cocks might repent and reform to-morrow, if she did not cast him down. And then arose the image of the other young man whose life had been imbittered by the careless youth, whom she had herself just occasioned needless humiliation, and promised to befriend. Above these partisan feelings arose another out of the night, nobler, more powerful, irresistible. Blanche was John's child.

There is strength in silence at times, which becomes profound weakness in shrinking from necessary revelation at others.

Miss Nancy opened her desk, and the dawn found her writing a letter to John Pierman.

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. SHARPE BUYS A COOK'S TICKET.

"I HAVE always declared that I would rather sink into my grave in peace without having taken a Cook's ticket. Yes, and here I have bought one, after all. Why, I told

Emma and Richard that I should feel like a cannon-ball propelled through space, or a comet stamped on the forehead by the label of the great excursion man—if comets have heads, the giddy things, shooting about on purpose to put sober and respectable stars minding their own business out of order. Miss Hawse, we can stop just as often as we please *en route*."

"And have no care of our baggage until we reach Nice," added Miss Nancy.

Paris was fading from sight. Mrs. Sharpe sat opposite in the ladies' carriage; the other occupants of the conveyance were two little maidens, clad in yellow, like canary-birds, and a sombre woman of massive, inscrutable countenance, wearing a black peaked hood over sable garments. Yes, Paris was fading on the horizon, but not before Miss Nancy had scattered confusion and discord by the fire-brand launched at Dr. Pierman on the night after the memorable drive with the white horse a month ago.

That gentleman had called on her the following day, and, after a long interview, had departed with a new wrinkle in his brow. Miss Nancy, having made her statement of the truth, stood by her guns; and herein this unsophisticated lady showed the vast difference between a Briarbush training under that unpractical person, the minister, and the outside world, which gathers its own garments closer after having a fact thrust under its very nose, and says, wisely, "Let every one find out for himself; this is none of my business."

During the interview Dr. Pierman had been silent and receptive, rather than shocked or startled. He had thanked her for the interest evinced in Blanche, and in departing closed the door effectually for Miss Nancy on further knowledge of the affair. She was sorely tempted sometimes to seek the girl, and read the result of it all in youth's transparent face, but pride withheld her. She must school herself to patience in having performed an act of duty.

Howard Denby, surrounded by maps and charts in an engineer's office in London, received a very cheerful letter from Miss Nancy at this time, calculated to enliven his mood, although no mention was made of the person nearest the thoughts of both writer and recipient. Their paths had again separated; the Piermans would go their way, and she her own, to the end of life. A sense of dreariness accompanied this reflection: she was always thrust outside those family circles where she did not belong. Always? Unkind aspersion on Mrs. Sharpe, who was prepared to cling to her closer than a brother, both from cordial liking and the necessity of having a confidante apart from those cooing turtle-doves, the bride and groom.

"Mind you, I don't believe a word of that trumped-up story about Richard's waiting another week for letters of importance," said Mrs. Sharpe, in the railway-carriage. "Fiddle-dee-dee! the mail-bags would not explode if required to take the correspondence of Mr. Richard Vidal to the South of France instead."

"A gentleman's correspondence is supposed to be of some importance," said Miss Nancy, with a smile.

Richard Vidal was an honest young fellow, with a buoyancy of temperament which made him rush headlong into all excitement of sight-seeing. His moments of serious gravity were when he endeavored to instruct his bride in questions of life to which he had as yet given little heed, to judge from the boyish unconcern of his own demeanor; and the lesson usually terminated in a kiss, or a peal of merry laughter, Mrs. Sharpe looking on with a frosty smile, and the manner of an old cat watching the gambols of kittens.

"As to that, Richard was left a neat little fortune by his father; but he needs a balance-wheel," returned Mrs. Sharpe. "They are mighty wise, those two, but I can see through them! Emma must needs have new dresses made in Paris for fashionable Nice: her wedding *trousseau* was not sufficiently fine when she got over here, although it cost enough at home; so we were just packed off comfortably while they waited to spend all the money they liked. I only hope they may not come across the town yet. Any thing I have left, after wasting my substance in Europe, shall go to my grandchildren."

The landscape was not unlike many scenes in America—stretches of brown earth, heaps of *débris*, half-finished buildings, detached freight-trains, with the peculiar and distinctive feature of lines of Lombardy poplars, stiffened into ungraceful age, and springing in rows of small, ugly shape. How can any people like the poplar? Mrs. Sharpe took out the neat little green book, and consulted the Cook ticket.

"We can be thirty days on the road if we choose; Mr. Cook allows us that privilege. Suppose we stop at Dijon for the night? The journey will be comfortably broken by that means."

"Or go on to Macon; we arrive there at eight o'clock," suggested Miss Nancy.

"Lyons is not reached until half-past ten to-night, and we must be very tired by that time," said Mrs. Sharpe, replacing the green book in her bag with an expression of satisfaction. It was a day to be remembered. Cook's ticket had attuned Mrs. Sharpe to perfect harmony with her surroundings. She cared not for the guards, the way-stations, the flocks of travelers seeking a place in the train as good as her own. Cook had placed a cork life-preserver beneath the arms of the worthy dame, which buoyed her up in

the waves of travel, and enabled her to look with pitying condescension on her less fortunate fellow-creatures.

Shadows were gathering in the valleys, and sunset was lingering about the crests of hills which formed the great water-shed of the rivers, as they approached Dijon.

"What a relief not to search up our trunks, and drag them to a hotel just for one night!" said Miss Nancy, and opened "Baedeker" to look for the best house for their need.

"We have had such a comfortable day, don't you think that we could keep on to Macon?" Mrs. Sharpe inquired, persuasively.

The Cook ticket, which allowed her to drop off almost anywhere, imparted such lightness to her spirits that the miles were becoming a jest. If she did not like the nose, not to mention the manners, of her fellow-passengers, she had only to get out of the train, and wait for another day and better features. This sense of security had the strangest influence in making one see the best side of affairs, whatever transpired.

"Oh, I am not tired!" assented Miss Nancy; so "Baedeker" was stowed away again in the rack above her head, and they went on.

The October twilight was cold, alpine, the sky having acquired the pale-green hue of a chrysoprase, now that the day had faded; a river flowed along beside the track, white and ghostly in the blackness of overhanging hills and border meadows; an occasional taper glimmered in the window of a solitary farm-house. The river was smoke from the engine trailing in mirage-like indistinctness along the ground, catching on the hedges, and wind-blown. The two little maidens in yellow, evidently provincials, sipped wine from a long slender flask, and nibbled cakes. Occasionally they exchanged a chirping monosyllabic remark, but for the remainder of the day they had perused neat books in dull covers, having about them the improving aspect of Fénélon or Madame de Genlis. The solitary woman in black remained quiet and self-absorbed, maintaining an impenetrable reserve that was none the less unapproachable because of a courteous manner.

In looking at her with the speculation one must expend on the companion of many hours, Miss Nancy was reminded of Martha Dunne. The underlying strength in the large, massive face, with its lines of pain and care, was religion, and in any country of the globe this type of face would have had this same strength. Something glistened in the thin, sallow hands once; it was a rosary.

"I forget about the hotels at Macon," said Miss Nancy, for the second time consulting "Baedeker."

"Don't you think that we could push on to Lyons, and have done with it?" suggested Mrs. Sharpe, instead of taking down her bag and basket.

"Yes, if you are not tired," assented Miss Nancy.

Oh no, Mrs. Sharpe was not in the least tired. Apparently, with that Cook ticket in her pocket, she would have experienced no sense of fatigue in going around the world in eighty days. "Baedeker" was again consigned to the rack, and the lamp was put in the roof, shedding its first pale beams on the occupants of the carriage. Little did Mrs. Sharpe realize what would befall her before those rays again flickered out in advancing day! The pale-green tints of twilight had faded, the mirage river been replaced by a gloomy void of darkness, the train was rushing into night.

"Half-past ten does not seem late, after all," mused Mrs. Sharpe, in great good-humor.

"Perhaps I had better—" began Miss Nancy, reaching after the small red volume.

"No; first listen to me. We have the carriage almost to ourselves, and are comfortably settled. It is only one night, and I am sure many travelers do much more than that. Let us go on to Marseilles," interposed her companion.

Miss Nancy could no longer restrain her laughter.

"It is our own affair," said Mrs. Sharpe, testily. "At Lyons we will bribe a guard to leave us undisturbed."

A guard was readily discovered who was entirely willing to be bribed, but Mrs. Sharpe had scarcely made her arrangements to enjoy the midnight journey, the little canary-bird maidens having taken flight, when the same guard, or his twin brother, launched such a number of female travelers on the ladies' carriage as rendered the inmates mere human pins, stacked in two rows.

"Murder! I shall die in this box for the night. Let me out!" panted Mrs. Sharpe, clutching wildly at her shawls and bags.

"You have given the guard our tickets," protested Miss Nancy.

This was but too true. The guard had claimed, and torn off, a fragment of the precious paper. How enviable did the boon of freedom at once become when it was lost! Mrs. Sharpe had been suddenly overwhelmed by the advent of a stout woman, *en déshabille*, who, in seating herself at her side, had surged over on the first lady's territory in all those numerous aggressions incident to size. The stout woman wore a loose robe of percale, a little black shawl, a tight-fitting widow's cap beneath her bonnet, framing a pleasing and evidently artificially tinted countenance.

Mrs. Sharpe nudged the stout lady, and grew red in the face; the stout lady did not yield an inch. Mrs. Sharpe audibly bewailed, if not the day she was born, at least the folly of trusting to guards, and of being ensnared by Messrs. Cook & Son.

"We could have stopped at Dijon, Macon, or Lyons," remarked Miss Nancy, opposite.

"I know it, and that does not make the matter any more pleasant," retorted Mrs. Sharpe. "I hope this will cure me of traveling in a ladies' carriage in the future. I shall have a fit of apoplexy before morning, and I should think that all the women in France had seen fit to bolt through by night express. If they consider it very respectable, I do not."

The most vivid dreams of illness do not surpass the horrors of a crowded ladies' carriage at night. Again that question of windows becomes vital, of damp breeze or suffocation, and the sashes go up and down, with varying degrees of ill-feeling engendered by the process. Miss Nancy leaned back in her corner, and observed her companions: the novelty of the thing pleased her. The others were surly, patient, affable, or grim, according to their several dispositions. Mrs. Sharpe sat with her shawl over her head, and the fresh wind blowing in her face, which she would on no account exclude. The stout lady already slept, with her hands in pearl-gray gloves folded in her lap. Beyond, the black-robed woman spoke soothingly, in such a delicately soft voice to a young lady of evidently petulant disposition beside her.

The lamp glimmered faintly in the centre of the roof, and the petulant young lady presently drew a green curtain over it, rendering the interior of the carriage still more obscure. How strange every thing seemed! Miss Nancy, acutely wakeful, peered out of the window at the clear sky now star-flecked, the fleeting outline of hills, and masses of shadow which might be villages clustered about the church, or parks of trees. Flying through space like a soul seeking eternity, what had she left behind? Whither was she journeying? Thought may span greater distance than the rushing train in the silent, wakeful hours.

From watching Mrs. Sharpe, apprehensive that she would yet wage a battle royal with the stout lady, and neither of them could ride backward, Miss Nancy was again wandering through the rooms of Uncle Simon's old mansion, preparatory to the public sale of his effects, musty, homely chambers enough, which had sheltered one meagre, self-sufficient life. Heirs carelessly toss out these treasures to any purchaser before the body is cold that valued them. It came to Miss Nancy with a sudden pang of reproach that she had been no more considerate; nay, she had sold Uncle Simon's roof-tree in order to make a pilgrimage to Rome.

"How could you be such a fool?"

Mrs. Sharpe was sitting bolt-upright with the shawl drawn over her nose; and as the stout lady in her sleep showed a desire to recline on her shoulder, like a peony lolling on its stalk, she had erected a barricade of an umbrella, a basket with spikes for ornaments, and a large bouquet, parting gift of her son-in-law, between them.

"My dear Mrs. Sharpe, it was your own choice," said Miss Nancy, mildly.

"Then you should not have allowed me to have my own way. You might have known how it would turn out, if you had any sense. Nothing is more tiresome than to have people always agree with you."

"You are unreasonable," Miss Nancy could not refrain from saying.

Mrs. Sharpe withdrew her nose wholly beneath the shawl, and fell asleep comfortably. Rushing through the night with shadowy landscape flying past, and the lamp's rays flickering through the green screen, Miss Nancy, her thoughts roving to the ends of the earth, became aware of feeling an extraordinary interest in the hands of the stout lady opposite. Why? They were plump, small members, with a rim of white arm visible above the glove of five buttons, and they were always folded in the lap while the owner slept profoundly. How the stout lady did sleep, to be sure! Whenever Miss Nancy's gaze reverted from the window, she fell to staring at the inanimate gloved hands which looked so dainty, while the percale morning-gown formed a curious and incongruous contrast of toilet, perhaps attributable to peculiarity of race.

At length Miss Nancy's active brain yielded to the general somnolency of the carriage, and she dozed. She was awakened by a hand on her ankle; the stout lady was stooping forward, and apparently groping on the floor; she was unfastening her boot. Miss Nancy's bag had been placed on the floor between her left foot and the window; she raised it and put it on the seat instead. The stout lady fell asleep again immediately. After all, our traveler was rather glad to have been aroused; Mrs. Sharpe was quiet, and she could watch the day-break, picturing in advance the beauty of the Mediterranean.

The dawn came in faint lines of light on the horizon, merging to pink and soft blue. There was a wide expanse of gray sands, and inlets where the water lapped up gently, and then a first glimpse of olive-trees, neutral in hue, as if smoke had developed into graceful forms of foliage, and sharp-spiked aloes tufting walls, the first indication of a change to tropical vegetation. Houses succeeded vineyards, villas detached, clearly visible in the growing light, then streets, and then—fulfillment of all dreams, more dazzlingly beautiful in the full radiance of morning than fancy ever painted it—the blue Mediterranean!

The woman in black, patient, and unruffled by the night's discomfort, returned Miss Nancy's greeting; Mrs. Sharpe emerged from

the shawl, crumpled, and with a stiff neck, thanks to the draught from the open window; the petulant young lady groaned, and adjusted her hat; and the stout person still slept, with lolling head, mouth slightly open, the rouge on her cheeks standing out in crimson disks of unnatural color in the pitiless presence of the rising sun.

Gladly did our travelers descend from the carriage at the dépôt, and stretch their cramped limbs, which almost refused their office.

"I never cut such a caper before!" said Mrs. Sharpe. "We have flown through France at night as if on a wager, or our lives depended on it, and have seen nothing. Why, we might have visited the wine districts!"

"Marseilles always reminds me of 'Little Dorrit,'" said Miss Nancy. "Don't you remember the blinding glare and heat; the man whose mustache went up, and his nose came down; Tattycoram; and the singular woman, Miss Wade?"

"Ah, but Dickens is gone; and I am sure that I don't know who is ever to replace him, for my part," replied Mrs. Sharpe.

They were driven to the Grand Hôtel de la Sardine, very spacious and handsome, with the aspect about it of hot noondays when the open court, with its palms and fountain, would be a grateful retreat.

Nôtre Dame de la Garde crowned the hill, most nobly placed of churches on the peak of rock, with the golden image of the Virgin on the spire rising against the sky, a dazzling beacon for the sailor's eye. A sick woman had been up all the weary steps, perhaps to give thanks for convalescence, and sat on the slope basking in the sunshine; a priest descended, his black form in silhouette against all the brilliant coloring of his surroundings. Below, the city seemed to lie in a basin formed by the encircling hills, a city more ancient than the first days of Roman conquest, and one of the modern world's great ports, with wide quays and store-houses, and the net-work of masts fringing the harbor, where narrow streets diverged from sunlit expanses, like some threads of life leading to darkness, crime, and death in slimy nooks, while others merged into squares with Oriental bazaars full of Eastern wares.

On this afternoon there was no hint of mistral or cloud, and beyond the ramparts of wall extended the margin of sea, calm and intensely blue, the rocks making their own shadows in the mirror-like surface, and Château d'If, forever associated with "Monte Cristo" in the strange mingling of fiction with fact, sheltering its low towers as if from the sweep of tempests. A carriage had ascended the hill, containing two ladies. The walls were everywhere glaring white or yellow, with sharp relief of shadow in angles beneath that sky of brilliant azure. Women toiled up the steep incline, bronzed by sun, their dark hair absolutely bleached to dusty hues, bearing shallow baskets of fruit and vegetables. Brown children laughed and quarreled in the dust of the highway. French children of the people seem unattractive, where the ugly blue blouse prevails, never fresh, and concealing any amount of wear on the part of the sallow, thin little ones. Babies only look plump and droll in their tight little caps.

Here in the South, the olive faces increased in beauty, approaching nearer the Italian, as the *patois* acquired Italian terminations. A little girl paused to glance at the carriage, herself a charming study, with small, regular features and black eyes; clad in pale-pink calico, a broad hat on her head, and carrying a basket of charcoal on her arm.

"I hope the road is not dangerous," said the elder lady. "I am always giddy on heights. Good gracious! driver, let me get out and walk."

In vain the driver, a hale and smiling old man, protested, and Miss Nancy raised her voice in remonstrance. Mrs. Sharpe descended from the carriage as the road wound about the brow of the eminence, and paced solemnly behind, holding her umbrella over her head, and followed by a vociferous train of venders, who seemed to spring out of the ground at every step in additional numbers.

"I wish you would not be silly, Mrs. Sharpe. There is really no danger, and you may get a sun-stroke," said Miss Nancy, actually losing her temper.

"Then you must put ice on my brain, if you can find any here," answered Mrs. Sharpe, doggedly. "No, I sha'n't buy candles; I'm not a Papist, and I don't understand a word you are saying."

This last remark was directed toward the venders with energetic head-shakings. An old crone had followed the carriage with her bunch of tapers held up appealingly to Miss Nancy, who was sorely tempted to buy one, and light it in the church on the hill, had not Mrs. Sharpe's eye been upon her. The way was steep, and the crone no doubt very poor; moreover, the temple on the hill was the sailor's church, and in all lands sailors have a place in the hearts of the people. Here, on the 15th of August, the silver statue from the church is borne through the city streets in procession, the sailors having brought it into town the previous evening on their shoulders. Miss Nancy's sympathy went out to Nôtre Dame de la Garde, as it had done to the rude Calvary at Boulogne. How plainly she could see it all again! Mrs. Sharpe's presence alone preventing her from buying the candle, she turned resolutely to the driver,

"Are you a republican, my good fellow?" she asked, deaf to the prayers of the crone.

The driver glanced over his shoulder at Miss Nancy in alarm and suspicion.

"No, madam. I am nothing."

"I am an American, and republican, you know," she responded, re-assuringly.

Thus encouraged, the driver opined that he also was republican, although in France it was not the same thing as in America. *Parbleu!* here one had the bayonet always held at one's throat. Yes, and Monsieur Thiers was a native of Marseilles, and yet did nothing for that city. It was not rendered clear to Miss Nancy's mind what Marseilles expected of Monsieur Thiers, if, indeed, it was clear to the driver's as a politician; but the circumstance seemed to oppress him as a vague grievance in the intervals of encouraging his horse and glancing back at Mrs. Sharpe toiling after, for whose conduct he could find no solution in his previous experience.

There stood the church, the atmosphere heavy with perpetual incense, the walls studded with votive pictures, the altars illuminated with votive candles, and down below in the crypt a dim lamp of oil waning and kindling in memory of dead sailors.

"I like to see the place in such weather," said Miss Nancy, pausing on the steps to gaze seaward. "One always associates it with fierce heat, and perhaps ravaged by pestilence, as in the days when the good bishop would not desert his flock in the plague, whose bronze statue still seems to bless the people among the trees of the square."

"The heat is sufficiently great to remind one of Tophet," returned Mrs. Sharpe, with countenance empurpled by her toilsome walk.

"Another prelate met with a terrible death out on one of the islands: Rolland, Archbishop of Arles, who was carried away captive by the Moors; murdered; his ransom accepted; the dead body dressed in pontifical robes, and sent back in a boat to the shore. Then, tourists and guide-books pronounce Marseilles uninteresting, when the different nationalities gathered in the port would alone prove the reverse."

"I intend to buy some pistachio-nuts; but go on," returned Mrs. Sharpe, fanning herself violently.

"Twenty-four centuries ago, a certain ruler held a festival, and gave his fair daughter a choice of husbands from among a colony of youthful Phocæans, dwellers in Asia Minor. She preferred Nestori, a Greek, who selected new ground to build on, and the bride and bridegroom founded Marseilles, B.C. 599."

"Very pretty, indeed," said Mrs. Sharpe. "How on earth shall we ever get down from this hill alive?"

The lady put her hand in her pocket, and turned a dismayed face toward her companion as she withdrew it again.

"Dear me! I hope nothing has happened," said Miss Nancy, apprehensively.

"Happened!" Twice Mrs. Sharpe's mouth opened and closed without distinct sound; then she ejaculated:

"It's gone again! I have always heard that experience is a dear school, yet fools learn in no other. Well, well! and a second time, too. Oh, you need not stare so helplessly, Miss Hawse! I know it was the stout woman in the railway-carriage, and, what is more, I shall always believe that she was a man in disguise."

"You don't mean that you have been robbed?" said Miss Nancy, faintly.

Could the stout woman have been a thief, and those neatly gloved hands false ones, folded in her lap?

"My purse is gone, and I have not looked before."

"What a world it is!" sighed our traveler, and the ladies descended the hill, Mrs. Sharpe clutching the sides of the carriage, and shutting her eyes tightly the while.

The Grand Hôtel de la Sardine did not fail to impress on the wayfarer the superiority of its accommodations. An olive-skinned boy, with a brass band on his cap, had invited the ladies to ascend by "the lift" in the morning; but Mrs. Sharpe had inspected the European imitation of the American elevator, and declined.

"It looks like a rickety box with glass sides," she had said, and the olive-skinned boy had retired humiliated.

There was a *table-d'hôte*, served with the utmost elegance, of which the ladies partook, and afterward, when the olive-skinned boy again appeared, his claims to consideration were not slighted.

"Let us try the lift," said Mrs. Sharpe, with flagging energy.

Just as she seated herself a servant came to the door of the box, and delivered a letter.

"From Richard; and my spectacles are upstairs. I am glad that there are no passengers besides ourselves."

Mrs. Sharpe held the letter in her hand, the boy closed the door with a crash, and the lift began to ascend rapidly.

"It seems to work smoothly," observed Miss Nancy, and was just preparing some phrases in her mind wherewith to question the boy concerning the mechanism when the lift began to oscillate with a grating sound.

"Goodness! it will break," shrieked Mrs. Sharpe. "The boy does not know how to manage it. We shall drop to the first floor presently."

The lift was behaving in a very extraordinary fashion, and the olive-skinned one seemed bewildered by its vagaries. First

it shot with terrific velocity to the very top of the house, stopping at no such "way-stations" as the floor designated by Miss Nancy; then it sunk again in a succession of jerks to six feet below their landing, where it remained stationary. A lengthy explanation ensued on the part of the boy.

"He says that the lift works by means of hydraulic pressure, and that he thought it would go longer. However, if the water is out, we must wait until a sufficient quantity flows in again for use," said Miss Nancy.

"We must wait for enough water to hoist us six feet," said Mrs. Sharpe, with more calmness, gazing up at the inaccessible landing. "Did you ever hear of the lady who went down in an elevator, and the heels of her boots were buried in the wood-work by the shock of concussion?"

"No, I never did," said Miss Nancy, shuddering nervously.

"I said then, I would never use one while Providence granted me feet, and here I am," said Mrs. Sharpe, solemnly.

Shrill whistles piped, bells rang, feet hurried along all the corridors, and heads peeped down at them. There was nothing so interesting to be seen in the Grand Hôtel de la Sardine at that moment as Mrs. Sharpe and Miss Nancy in the lift, caught like a bubble in a glass tube. The landlord appeared at the door above, and they had ample opportunity of admiring his round face, bald head, and long mustache, as he hung over them with hands extended as if in the act of blessing them, like a cherub leaning out of a cloud.

The landlord called Heaven to witness that it was an unheard-of calamity for the water to fail, and their detention should be but brief. After they had sat there for an hour, Mrs. Sharpe remarked,

"I am tired of being stared at as if I were a wild animal escaped from a menagerie. I believe I will open my letter without spectacles."

As she tore the envelope a second letter fell out, and Miss Nancy, stooping to recover it, saw her own name.

"Richard wrote a line here, and inclosed this letter for you," explained Mrs. Sharpe.

Of course Miss Nancy studied the envelope, address, and postmark with intense curiosity, being a woman, before opening it. A stranger had evidently written her from America. Her first fear was of ill news from Briarbush, and grandmother.

What was this? The landlord was again gesticulating above them. Mrs. Sharpe and the olive-skinned one seemed to be shouting in her ear, while she sat dumb and motionless. The letter was from Martha Dunne, the lines swam before her eyes; all she seemed to realize was that Uncle Simon's shares had been discovered, and she, Nancy Hawse, was the possessor of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars!

"My! you look as if you had seen a ghost. We are to climb up on boxes, I believe, if he lowers them before the thing breaks."

It was a pleasant sight to behold Mrs. Sharpe scramble up on these boxes when arranged, and clamber thankfully into the corridor once more, with the assistance of the landlord, a sympathizing *femme de chambre*, and two porters.

"Now, tell me your wonderful news, my dear," she said, when they were safe in their rooms once more.

Miss Nancy, with hysterical laughter and tears, read Martha Dunne's letter to her friend.

"I am glad of it," exclaimed Mrs. Sharpe, and kissed the heiress. "There is no one of my acquaintance who deserves better fortune than you, Nancy Hawse."

"Now I can send back and buy Pandora," exclaimed Nancy.

"'The Pandora!' What is that? Do not lose your head all at once," admonished Mrs. Sharpe.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUNSHINE AT NICE.

Said Mrs. Sharpe,

"This is the strangest climate I ever knew. First you are roasted, and then you are frozen, or one side of you is baked in the sun, while the other shoulder may be stiff with cold at the same moment. You either feel like flying in the exhilarating atmosphere, or running ten miles at least, or you wish to sit down and quarrel furiously with your best friends, impelled to it by the pricking irritation of a galvanic-battery applied to your spine."

"You can not find fault with Cimiez, and on such a day," replied Miss Nancy, laughing.

"Well, no, I can not," assented her companion, with unexpected docility, and became silent.

Sunshine at Nice. What a wealth of life and color, a dream of perfumed breeze and rarefied keen air the very words suggest, and a landscape so peculiar that it has been compared with painting on porcelain! The road wound up to Cimiez, leaving far below a sheet of dazzling sea; then the town of Nice, a straggling town, never handsome, with dried river-course strewed with the laundress's clothes, full of evil odors and unsightly objects at every turn, and that margin of old houses huddled beneath the brink of rocks, with crumbling, steep roofs, black in the daylight — roofs built before Christ dawned on the world. Farther up the slope was a girdle of villas of all tints, harmonizing with the brilliant blue of sea and

sky; here a turret of red or violet, a dome of yellow and sage green, and the terra cotta of Viennese architecture framed in hedges of cactuses and aloes, shaded by feathery palms, the gardens a wilderness of roses, thyme, heliotrope, and jessamine.

Two gigantic oak-trees grew on the plateau, spreading knotted branches abroad to shade the walls of the Franciscan convent. The peaceful stillness of a land steeped in the balm of golden sunshine was over every thing; spicy scents floated up from beds of flowers and herbs; the hills piling to mountains on the left took a softer outline of lilac bloom from the all-pervading warmth; and the chain of snow Alps — most marvelous contrast — rested like peaks flecked with diamond-dust against the heavens. Motes floated in the air — motes, or sparkling insects — coming and vanishing again, as if perishing in glad dissolution in the glory of the sunbeams. In this very ecstasy of light and life there were solemnity and silence. On the left rose the old castle, once a citadel to oppose the pirates that scourged the coast not a century ago, carrying away to horrible captivity men and women; on the right the Byzantine chapel, erected on the spot where died the czarowitch, when the Russian emperor walked at midnight to Villa Franca beside the corpse of his son, bearing a lighted candle, to the waiting frigate; and beyond the curve of shore, Cannes, sheltered by its charming little bay of Napoli and the purple line of Esterels.

"The Riviera flowers are simply distracting," Miss Nancy announced, as they paused beneath the oaks. "Violets unequaled for size and sweetness, tuberoses perfect as wax, cherry, laurel, rosemary, and the little golden ball of cassia known to Scripture, surpass hot-house plants in colder climates. Think of the fields of blossoms between Nice and Grasse, where they must distill their odors into bottles to perfume the world. Why, the very orange-trees are marvels."

"I suppose that I shall wind you up like a clock, or the man with a banjo in the corner of the minstrel troupe who always inquires 'Why' in the right place," returned Mrs. Sharpe.

"Consider the utility," pursued Miss Nancy, earnestly: "the orange blossoms furnish neroli; orange-flower water, with an admixture of leaf, is the next process; the rind of the green fruit prepares certain liquors and perfumes; while the pulp feeds cattle. Then, the olive-tree is such a manifold blessing to these countries; and the caronbier-tree, flourishing in the clefts of the rocks, like the orange in shape, is also very useful; the wood is that rich red in cabinet-work, and the fruit consists of long pods of a shining burned sienna color, the husk hard, the pulp sweet, and the yellow nuts furnish a substitute for coffee when roasted."

"Really, my dear, you are a walking dictionary. The scent of neroli makes me sick, and I hate oil; but I am very much obliged to you all the same. If I am ever wrecked on a desert island, like Robinson Crusoe, I promise to eat the caronbier-nuts properly roasted, because I shall miss my coffee. Let us visit the cemetery first, and then peep into the monastery if possible."

"I should like to see monks in their cells, of all things," returned Miss Nancy, glancing at the sombre walls of the building with a degree of terror and fascination.

Solemn, sunny, and still, the amphitheatre crowned the hill, perfect in outline now, with the dens for wild beasts, the seats for the people, the arena where Christian martyrs shed their blood, while the prefect of the district sat and enjoyed the sport with such zest as one banished to the provinces might feel when debarred from the Coliseum. For the first time, Miss Nancy beheld with her own eyes the Roman arch, rising in perfect symmetry, and dwarfing her size as she passed beneath a fragment as massive and imperishable as the Roman nature and the Roman fame.

Solemn, sunny, and still was the cemetery hewed from rock, lined with tombs up to the convent wall, chevaliers, countesses, marquises, and courtiers finding a resting-place in stone chambers where a crucifix gleams beyond the grated door, and immortelles reveal that memory has not perished yet. A marble woman knelt beside a cross, exquisitely pure and white in the shadow of the church. A monk's voice disturbed the brooding quiet, floating out of one of the grated windows above, mellow and rich — an Italian voice—but did not reach the marble woman kneeling beside the cross.

Solemn, sunny, and still the convent stood, arched, with spires and curious design of roof, the rows of cells occupied by the brothers visible beyond. Mrs. Sharpe and Miss Nancy entered the chilly stone passage, peered inquisitively at a roughly paved court, and even went to the curb of the picturesque well in the centre, and looked in as if anticipating that mysteries lurked at the bottom. The water dripped monotonously from moss-grown stones, telling no tales of monastic life—if there were any to impart—and the black depths of water far below revealed only their own inquiring faces. The church permitted ingress to our travelers, and they saw an interior, very dark, rich, with veiled pictures, carved pulpits and pillars, and those illuminated missals and precious volumes cherished by the priesthood. Farther a female foot might not intrude, and accordingly Miss Nancy was particularly desirous to continue her investigations.

A great wooden portal swung open, disclosing a second stone corridor more chilly and dark than the first, and a monk with

face concealed in his brown cowl, glancing at the visitors, hurried away, part of the gloomy obscurity. Then the door closed once more, and they were outside on the plateau beneath the oak-trees, having seen the monk of romance and fiction hastening along the stone cloisters with an iron cross inserted in the wall above his head.

Following a little path, the ladies next came to the edge of the hill, their way leading them past gray walls and crumbling ruins honey-combed with dark nooks and secret passages in the skeleton of a former monastery, the stones tufted with tiny clinging plants all blooming with little pink bells and scented, snowy plumes. A border of olive-trees formed a gray veil above the town from this point, interspersed with chestnut, pepper, and acacia, and the wide-spread, glittering sea, well named here Baie des Anges, where a white gull circled, and dipped to the wave. Far below was the villa where Lord Bulwer Lytton is said to have written one of his novels. Beyond is the home of Cruvelli, once famous as the most capricious nightingale of the Parisian Opera, now hidden in the leafy thickets of private life. Below, again, Garibaldi was born. The mountains had gained a lovely, silvery mist, which changed the snow-peaks also to pinnacles of silver, and on the horizon-line of waters rested the same exquisite vapor. Flowers, sunshine, the balmy warmth and purity of atmosphere where the insects hovered and vanished, and the spire of the convent church pointing heavenward — these blended to one complete whole.

"Oh, let us remain here on the heights!" exclaimed Miss Nancy, rapturously. "I am weary of the town and its tawdry display."

"So am I," rejoined Mrs. Sharpe, seating herself on a rock. "The young people seem to enjoy it, though."

"I wonder if it is a good place for young people," queried Miss Nancy, after a pause.

Behind them a brown donkey occupied an arch of the old Roman ruin for a stable, and poked out his head, blinking reflectively. Donkeys were irresistible to Miss Nancy, whether saddled with little boxes for children, themselves but babies, or soberly trotting in the path of duty with panniers of clean linen balanced on their sides. She went over and patted him on the nose, while Mrs. Sharpe said,

"They spend money like water here. It requires large sums to keep afloat at a hotel in Nice."

"Perhaps other parts of Europe would improve their minds more, and they are both so young," said Miss Nancy, stroking the donkey's intelligent, droll little face, and looking intently at the back of Mrs. Sharpe's bonnet.

Had that lady turned her head, she would have been startled by the expression on her companion's face, which was thoughtful, perplexed, and undecided. That morning she had leaned from her window attracted by the conversation of two gentlemen in the garden below. The first gentleman had remarked,

"They say at the club that a young American is going to the dogs."

"Really! The *tapis vert* or *baccarat?*" inquired the second.

"A little of both, I fancy," returned the first. "No, not stopping at this house—at the Hôtel Louis d'Or."

The Vidals, arriving two weeks after their elders, had gone to the Louis d'Or. Now, why Miss Nancy, standing on the height at Cimiez, petting a brown donkey, should associate this conversation with Richard Vidal she could not tell, but she did so instinctively, and the conviction troubled her all the more deeply because of the unconscious state of Mrs. Sharpe concerning her own thoughts.

"Spoken like a school-mistress," said Mrs. Sharpe, rising. "Young people must enjoy themselves, I suppose, and it occurs to me, my dear Miss Hawse, that we are lingering likewise. Ah, I must keep an eye on you since you have become an heiress, that you do not make a great foreign marriage—a count, at the very least."

"Don't be silly, please," said Miss Nancy, hastily, and reddened with sensitive embarrassment.

They had indeed lingered, and the spell of the Riviera was on them all, beguiling to a few more days of sunshine, beguiling also by fearful telegrams from farther on of storms and cold, so that the affrighted and enchanted traveler pictured once balmy Italy as a howling waste, buried knee-deep in snow, and not safe ground until spring. Two months had elapsed since Miss Nancy received the tidings that she was a rich woman, and she was already becoming used to scattering all the sous she had long craved among the old and decrepit poor. Further explanations had come from Martha Dunne relative to her brother's affairs. The stern, conscientious woman had not flinched from the task she had set for herself to discover those to whom he had been indebted, and those whom he had injured as a prosperous man. Had not Miss Nancy found the pocket-book, and interested Martha Dunne in her own story, traces of Uncle Simon's money might indeed have been discovered, yet not with the same directness of purpose in search.

Uncle Simon's money had been invested in an oil company. How he was ever attracted to the field of speculation, and intrusted the sum to Hiram Dunne, must ever remain a mystery to all save the two dead men now. Nay, had Hiram Dunne lived, would he ever have made the restitution to Miss Nancy without clear legal proof of

claim, farthing for farthing, that his sister did with almost feverish haste and exactness? Martha was also moved to impart to Miss Nancy some of her own schemes for the future, the maturing of those vague aspirations of a whole previous solitary life when she had served for bread, in the sudden inheritance of power to fulfill them. She would make plans such as had never been attempted for the needy, and organize many homes, self-supporting, and calculated to meet the wants of the industrious — not expend all on one great structure with *Charity* written over the door, and which would then stand empty. Miss Nancy had responded, thrilling with sympathy over the project.

The Jardin Publique was thronged with people; the palm-trees relieved the dazzling whiteness of the promenade here and there; and the band was playing, imparting an elasticity to the step, a quickening current in the veins surely not felt elsewhere save beneath that Mediterranean sky. Fat old gentlemen strolled about, carrying white umbrellas; jaunty officers mingled with the populace; the carriages passed and repassed the battery of loungers lining the way. The Russian sat in her landau, half concealed in lap-robe of snowy fur; the American drove past in her pony-carriage, great jewels sparkling in her ears; the English girl showed her fair face more charily, having been swept away by paterfamilias to aristocratic Cannes and quiet Hyères. It was altogether a most incongruous mixture of splendor, extravagance, paste, and sham, jostling and surveying each other good-naturedly.

The Niçois, in brown-velveteen coat, a dash of red about his person in cravat or sash, smoked his cigarette, gazing at the strangers, half amused and never surprised by any new type.

"This place is going down-hill, I believe," said Mrs. Sharpe, reflectively. "A stream of vice flowing from all quarters of the globe naturally drives away virtue, and I am sure it is a wicked place enough. Nice seems to me to wear its hat very much on one side and to swagger, if a man, and to trail its skirts over dirty pavements, with its face horribly painted beneath a white-lace veil, if a woman."

"Monaco is ruining the whole Riviera, like a blight on the fairest blossom," said Miss Nancy.

"Yes, indeed," responded Mrs. Sharpe. "And what a mercy it is that we Americans do not naturally take to gambling!"

"Let those who think they stand take heed lest they fall," said the school-marm, solemnly.

"Well, I do not suppose that ominous remark is intended for me, as I never expect to visit the horrible place again," said Mrs. Sharpe, quite gayly.

"Nor do I," added Miss Nancy.

The Pension Cosmopolitaine, where our travelers dwelt, was a white house with green shutters, surrounded by a garden and facing the promenade. As set forth in the advertisement, the Pension Cosmopolitaine was all that heart could desire in the way of such an establishment; and if basking in the sun's full rays and commanding an uninterrupted view of the sea could satisfy, the boast was fulfilled in the result. The closer, microscopic investigation incident to a prolonged stay, however, revealed that the garden was ragged and disheveled, with a fountain in the centre admirably adapted for fostering mosquito life, and a few orange-trees drooped against the wall; that the mansion had a battered and scarred aspect, and a tendency in-doors to settle, with yawning chinks above and below, perhaps attributable to its once having served in the unsuccessful mission of a school for young ladies. Despite these disadvantages, the Pension was excessively genteel, always crowded, and gathered that variety of elements to be anticipated from its name, and the town where it was located. The secret of this popularity, stripped of all those pleasant little deceptions of excuse which deceive nobody, was the reasonable price demanded, and no other consideration.

The powers of government were usually invisible, and consisted of four sisters who had kept the school in former years. At noon daily the Mesdemoiselles Tissier might have been seen walking in a private garden, bare-headed, and with parasols exactly alike, which gave them the aspect of a procession of mushrooms, now promenading down a side path, now clustering about a plant with the charming harmony so desirable in families which made them all bend over a flower at once. On the stroke of one the white parasols vanished again, and the Mesdemoiselles Tissier appeared no more that day in the eyes of their *pensionnaires*. What became of them afterward was always a subject of lively discussion in the *salon* of a morning, when the ladies met there to read the newspapers, sew, and gossip about each other.

Between the French school-mistress and Miss Nancy how great the contrast! The elder Mademoiselle Tissier wore a becoming *déshabille*, consisting of a flowered loose gown, her coiffure most elaborately constructed of puffs and braids innumerable, which, with a straw hat trimmed coquettishly with roses, gave her something of the aspect of an antiquated Dresden shepherdess.

The Pension sustained its reputation for many nationalities by a Swiss head-waiter of pugnacious disposition, who waged perpetual warfare with his underlings, gathered from Italian, French, and German byways of waiterdom; and the Tower of Babel was shadowed forth in miniature by the con-

fusion of tongues at the *table-d'hôte* nightly spread by the Mesdemoiselles Tissier. Scandinavia held one end of the *salle à manger;* Great Britain claimed the whole middle of the table; and there was a margin of Americans, Spaniards, and occasional Poles or Belgians, who came and went like beads slipped up and down on a string.

Mrs. Vidal was awaiting their return impatiently.

"Do come with me to the club matinée, Miss Hawse," she cried. "A black silk and lace fichu will do. Oh, ma, my Worth dress has arrived, and I mean to show it, only Richard has gone off somewhere with the duke. So tiresome, is it not?"

"I will accompany you, of course," said Miss Nancy, thinking how odd it was to have passed the line where people always seem to take one for elderly, and therefore fit to be a chaperon.

"Will it be very gay, Mrs. Vidal?"

"Oh dear, no; a dance or so and an ice, with a little flirtation," replied Mrs. Vidal, gathering up her train.

So the Worth dress came upstairs in the Pension Cosmopolitaine, while Miss Nancy assumed her best gown in haste, Mrs. Sharpe looking on with a mixture of pride and displeasure. The bride had changed much in these few months, having gained that worldly charm of *savoir faire* in an exceedingly bad school, where the colors are apt to be hard and prominent in imitation of the softly blended hues of the original. Her cheeks had lost something of their roundness, and there were lines beneath her eyes suggestive of late hours; but she was assured, composed, and excessively gay in speech and manner. In a word, she was rapidly approaching that standard erected by foreign nations of the American wife abroad, young, pretty, and extravagant, out of whose pleasing eccentricities dramatists may reap their harvests —Victorien Sardou and Alexandre Dumas on the Paris stage. The word "fast" has a certain half-fearful charm to ears masculine and feminine not to be lightly estimated.

Mrs. Vidal was a belle, much to her own delight and her mother's astonishment. She spent the morning in absorbed rapture, wondering what she would wear at the evening's party, and she wept when all wire-pulling failed to obtain her an invitation to a private costume ball, where she had quite set her heart on appearing as Dawn, with her yellow hair hanging down her back, and Richard's new diamond bracelets on her arms. Now, the Worth dress must go to the club matinée, despite Richard's non-appearance, and the wearer had an especial reason for claiming Miss Nancy's companionship instead of that of her own mother.

The club ball-room was already filled when the Worth dress appeared. Daylight was carefully excluded, and chandeliers illuminated gilded ceilings, mirrors, and polished floor, which gave Miss Nancy the same giddy feeling imparted by the Luxembourg galleries, when Pandora in falling became added to the school-marm's possessions. She gladly escaped to one of the seats ranged in a double tier about the room, where she sat a delighted spectator, and by no means neglected, for people were very polite to our heroine, especially elderly foreign gentlemen with gray mustaches, who paid her compliments which she failed to understand.

"I am just the same person as before I had money," she reflected, rather grimly, as those are apt to reflect who inherit tardy fortunes.

There could be no doubt about the triumph of the Worth dress. In all that brilliant concourse ot satins, lace, and creamy-white, the green-velvet robe, with its sparkling embroideries of silver and bewildering convolutions of trimming, was unequaled in conspicuous attractiveness, and Mrs. Vidal, with cheeks slightly flushed and eyes very bright, was supremely happy. She had outdone, fairly eclipsed, every one. Miss Nancy watched the dancers, only half heeding the hum of conversation and the airy music which made her tap her own foot on the ground in a wild desire to join the whirling crowds. Here a French officer skipped with neat and jaunty steps; there a German flew along in the maddest *galop* pace, with his blonde hair falling over his spectacles; and an American couple glided between in the intricate mazes of the "Boston." The music and the brilliant scene were mounting also to Miss Nancy's head like wine; her cheeks flushed, and her eyes sparkled, as she kept time with her foot on the waxed floor. Mrs. Vidal was dancing with a person of the type of physiognomy known as "hatchet-face," his mustache terminating in two attenuated spikes above hollow cheeks, his hair parted in the middle of a small flat head, his attitude partaking of those exaggerations sometimes observed in a jumping-jack suspended outside of a toy-shop by a string.

"I don't like the man's face; it is narrow, cynical, and evil," thought Miss Nancy, who was subject to the prompt repulsions of the unsophisticated.

Then she fell to wondering why Richard Vidal was not in attendance on his pretty wife in such a public place; why he permitted her to be whirling around in the embrace of the evil-looking man with the spiked mustache. Her meditations were interrupted by a little commotion incident to the green-velvet train coiling like a serpent about the feet of the partner, and Mrs. Vidal came to the ground with her cavalier. She was up again, laughing, and protesting that she was unhurt, in a moment; but she came over to Miss Nancy and sat down.

"I suppose I should not dance any more after that; but my card is full," she said,

complacently. "What a pity all those nice-looking girls are without partners! I tried to drive the count away to dance with some of them, but he would not go."

Mrs. Vidal, with that prestige of being a belle, and in the Worth dress, was not without partners. Miss Nancy regarded her anxiously, and remained silent. Was this the shy, rather constrained bride of Mulcher's Hotel in London?

"Now, Miss Hawse, I have a fine plan to propose," she continued, glibly, and not taking the trouble to read the doubt in her companion's honest gray eyes. "Let us go over to Monaco for a moonlight night, and find Richard. Mother would only scold, so she need not know, and it is such a lovely spot in the evening."

"Is Richard at Monaco, then?" inquired Miss Nancy, soberly.

"Yes; there is no other place to go, you know; but he promised to come back for the matinée. We will punish him by going too; he need not think that he is to have all the fun."

"Emma Vidal, I wonder you are not afraid to have him go to Monaco, a place that ruins so many victims every year."

Mrs. Vidal's eyes grew round with astonishment; then a little flush of resentment passed over her features.

"Richard does not play; he is only a spectator, and it amuses him to watch the others. Besides, he is with the duke, and he is dead set against gambling. You make him quite furious if you only hint at the subject."

It would seem that the young couple made very great acquaintances, knew every body; among others the duke, living almost *incognito* at the Hôtel Louis d'Or, and this distinguished personage had taken up Mr. Richard Vidal. Miss Nancy reflected before assenting to the project. If Richard Vidal was at Monaco, it was best to go there, as a duty not to be evaded, for none could foresee the result.

The moon possesses everywhere in Europe a different charm, whether resting on ruins, and rendering them solemn and beautiful ghosts rising from the immortal past, or the gay life of cities, the silent lagoons, and bridges of old towns; but nowhere has it the fairy beauty bestowed on the tiny principality of Monaco. Just as the sunshine imparts loveliness to this garden spot made to blossom by art on the rocky promontory, gives the sea additional amethyst tints as it laves the cliffs, and adds to the mountains a richer purple color, so the moon, looking over the rampart of hills behind, adds the bewitchment of her power, converting the rainbow dyes of day into purest frosted silver.

The palms quivered in this mellow radiance; unseen flowers yielded their perfume; a fret-work of delicate shadows rested on the marble whiteness of the Monte Carlo terraces; the sea, a soft gray sheet extending to the horizon, broke on the shore in luminous ripples with those whispering, inarticulate voices coming as fainter warnings from the great deep. How many eyes, feverish with desperation and despair — the madness most inexplicable of human failings having mounted to the brain — have looked up at that starry heaven, so calm and immutable, before rushing into the darkness of suicide! How many ears have heard in the whispering voices of that heaving sea the echoes of a lost life, and hastened "anywhere out of the world?" A place accursed as perhaps is no other spot on earth, with the sunbeams playing upon laughing waters, and the moon chastening to silvery fret-work of light and shadow the most exquisite forms of nature, and flowers perfuming the passing breeze.

Two ladies climbed the steps from the eight-o'clock evening train.

"Are you not glad that we came?" demanded Mrs. Vidal, laughing gayly.

"Yes; but I don't like being here without a gentleman," demurred Miss Nancy.

"Oh, every one does it," responded Mrs. Vidal, carelessly. "You were provoking not to come in season to dine at the Hôtel de Paris. Why, epicures pronounce it the best dinner to be obtained in Europe."

On this point Miss Nancy had been firm; she would not come over earlier on the chance of finding Richard Vidal in the famous banquet hall. She felt anxious, and doubtful about the step she had been persuaded to take even now, and paused outside the Casino with the strongest reluctance to enter. The night was pure and restful, with the mountains forming deepest shadow behind, and the sea breaking almost at their feet.

The doors of the Casino had no sooner opened than they found themselves, by startling, almost bewildering, contrast, in another world—one of heat, blinding light, noise, and moving throngs. The concert was already in progress in the handsome *salle*. A man darted past them swiftly, wearing no hat, and glanced at Miss Nancy with a look she never forgot, and his disappearance into the night was followed by the sharp report of a pistol-shot, which the strains of the orchestra speedily drowned. The man had shot himself on the door-step. It was one of those unpleasant instances of ingratitude deplored by Monsieur Blanc. What would you have?

The world will play: if rich, as a pleasant excitement; if poor, with the hungry desire to reap a fortune easily in the spinning of a roulette ball; and Monsieur Blanc, driven from Homburg by inexorable Kaiser Wilhelm, has made a tropical paradise for his victims, receives them with sweet strains

of classical music as his honored guests; if they disapprove of *trente et quarante*, feasts them on choicest viands, and includes wines, if they happen to be addicted to the pleasures of the table. Then to have a wretch with gray, set face blow out his brains on the door-step in malice, and to make the evening unpleasant. Fie! Monsieur Blanc would fain expect a better return from human nature.

A second man had just emerged from the *salles à jeu*, paused irresolutely and glanced into the concert-room, stroked his mustache, and retraced his steps the way by which he had come. An English dowager joined her young daughters, who made a place for her on a velvet seat; her *distrait* manner and nervous biting of the lips betrayed that she had lost. The music of the spheres would fall on dulled ears if the gambler were calculating the changes of another set of numbers promising lucky and fresh combinations to attain a desired result. Another lady had buried her face in her lace pocket-handkerchief, and yielded to a tempest of tears in the vestibule, while one of the officials conversed with her in half-contemptuous tones. Monsieur Blanc desired neither frowns, nor tears, nor pistol-shots—only smiles and gayety in his dominions.

These bubbles floated from time to time in the outer eddies of the great central maelstrom, the *salles à jeu* — another world, indeed, from the pure moonlight, the wide stretch of sea, outside. Miss Nancy's face had grown grave and white; Mrs. Vidal shivered and became subdued; neither could escape from the haunting vision of a desperate creature driven to bay who had been swept past them, and in the stroke of a minute launched recklessly on eternity.

"I wish we had not come," murmured the younger woman, half fretfully.

In the superb rooms beyond the muffling baize doors the illumination was still more brilliant, the interiors more richly decorated, but the tables were rendered invisible by the standing crowd about them. A dangerous crowd, where each man suspected his neighbor, and was utterly faithless as to the apparent respectability covered by a good coat. The first persons to observe the two new arrivals were the croupiers—pale, composed-looking individuals, who scented strangers, weighing and measuring them as if by instinct, while languidly raking in the coins. At last they had reached the goal. Here was the snare that lured people thousands of miles; chandeliers like gilded cones were suspended above green tables, where gold and silver leaped and spun from place to place, or lay in little glittering heaps before the greedy eyes gloating over the precious metal, or fell with musical chime into expectant palms stretched out to receive. Money leaping, spinning, falling in dazzling heaps! This was the spectacle knowing no satiety, this the enchantment for which fathers beggared their children, and sons brought their parents to ruin, on which women staked their souls.

Miss Nancy feared to search the faces, those impassive lineaments of the experienced gambler which betrayed no emotion, not the quiver of a muscle, the vibration of an eyelash, at heavy loss, at stupendous gains. A young woman sat opposite with pale aquiline features, beautifully dressed, composed as if in her own drawing-room, and presently emptying her purse of the last napoleon, watched it ingulfed, and moved away. Two old men with snowy hair sat next, also imperturbable in outward aspect, a lean, wolfish resemblance in their profiles. Was Richard Vidal here? and, if so, had he resisted the potent, subtle influence of the room all this time?

Mrs. Vidal reached over and tapped a stout, middle-aged gentleman on the arm in friendly greeting. He turned, and in so doing revealed Mr. Richard Vidal seated at the *trente-et-quarante* game.

"Richard, you promised not to play! Come away directly, sir."

It was not the first scene of the kind enacted at that table. A croupier's thin lips curved into an ironical smile. The stout gentleman was the duke. His manners were very elegant, and he immediately overwhelmed the ladies with polite attentions. Richard Vidal rose from his seat with a laugh; his face was flushed, the veins in his temples were swelled to cords, yet his mouth and eyes perpetually smiled.

"I have been winning like the mischief, Emmy. My pockets are full of gold; and it is very good fun, I can tell you."

If there could be collusion between croupier and fate, it would seem to be exercised in this curious spell of sorcery: a novice almost invariably wins at first, and is delighted.

"I don't like Monaco," said Mrs. Vidal, pensively, in the returning train. "You must promise never to go again, darling Richard."

So "darling Richard" promised unhesitatingly. The duke smoothed his mustache, perhaps to conceal a flitting smile of amusement.

"I wonder what all the missionaries are about?" suddenly exclaimed Miss Nancy. "If a second Peter the Hermit should arise, he could scarcely find a better field for a crusade, needing armor of steel, fervid eloquence, and all the heroism of a reformer, than to preach to the multitudes as they flock to Monaco."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MISS NANCY IS ENTERTAINED BY A MARQUIS.

On the 20th of January, the *gare* at Nice presented its usual animated appearance as the hour revolved toward three, travelers with wraps and bags being interspersed with excursionists to Monaco attired in silk and velvet, the jewels intended to sparkle beneath the golden chandeliers of the Casino curiously out of place in a dirty *salle d'attente.* Miss Nancy Hawse stood in one corner mounting guard over a pile of bags and baskets, while Mr. Richard Vidal, in the line before the ticket-office, from time to time waved his hand re-assuringly to his mother-in-law, as she hovered anxiously between the two places.

"There is so much official red tape about these Continental railways that I only wonder passengers ever get through at all. The idea of turning us back to have the ticket stamped! Oh, you need not laugh, Miss Hawse, in that aggravating and superior way. We shall see who comes out best in the end."

Mrs. Sharpe made these observations to Miss Nancy, mounting guard over the bags in the corner, when she wheeled about in her walk. Mr. Vidal having pressed up to the pigeon-hole, and thrust his head forward into the aperture, remained so long motionless in the attitude that visible signs of impatience became manifest in the line behind him. Necks were craned, heads nodded, and the pass-word was given with a certain despairing resignation,

"Monsieur has a *billet circulaire?*"

Presently monsieur came away, glancing about in rather a puzzled manner.

"Richard, what is the matter now?" demanded Mrs. Sharpe, planting her umbrella before her in the attitude usually assigned to a fairy godmother.

"He says that this sort of affair is stamped at the other office," returned Mr. Vidal, slowly, and still glancing around.

"Then hurry, hurry, for gracious sake! or we shall be too late for a seat," cried Mrs. Sharpe.

Then followed a rush, a clamor of voices, a ringing of bells, a hissing of steam, and the two ladies were seated in the train moving away toward Genoa. The last person they saw was Richard Vidal, bright and happy as usual, and the last reflection of Miss Nancy's was on the singular reluctance of the young couple to quit this spot.

She had waited weeks for them, partly in dread of making the plunge into Italy alone, and partly because Mrs. Sharpe desired also to journey toward Rome; but with the Vidals the following Monday or Thursday was a limit so vague that it receded before them like a ray of light. Richard had kept his word, and went no more to Monaco without his wife, which was a compromise perfectly satisfactory to both. The spell of the Riviera thus lengthening out was broken finally by outward events, coming in the form dear to all American hearts abroad, *The Register.* Reading this sheet one day, Miss Nancy discovered that Dr. Pierman and family were on the list of Maquay, Hooker, & Co., Rome; and in another column of the same paper she found Mrs. L. Cocks and Mr. Rockwell Cocks; Oppenheim, Nerone, & Co., Cairo, Egypt. Miss Nancy's heart beat a little faster as she read. Was this separation of interest temporary or final in the two families?

The trifling incident of discovering these familiar names in a newspaper changed the tenor of a letter which she was about posting to her young friend, Howard Denby, in London. She tore up the already completed epistle, and, couching her commendation of his decision to personally undertake the supervision of work in South America in another form, urged him not to again turn his face toward the New World without first having seen Rome. Miss Nancy infused into her letter some of her own enthusiastic veneration for the Eternal City. It became evident before the fourth page was completed that Howard Denby was supine if he allowed this last opportunity to slip away, and examples were quoted of students and artists from all lands, fired with the resolve to reach that shrine, if they begged their way, or went on their hands and knees toward the fulfillment. Miss Nancy did so dislike to be beaten, have her own weapons turned, and foiled! In response to the letter, Howard Denby, apparently moved by her arguments, agreed to visit Rome in the month of February, and hoped to find her in that city when he arrived.

"He may come the first or the last of the month, and I will not fail to meet him," said Miss Nancy, with a recurrence of that momentary fright at her own power which had possessed her when she took Blanche Pierman to the Hôtel Cluny.

After that she had shaken off the spell resolutely, and announced her intention of starting the following week with such an expression of determination that the young Vidals were thrown into confusion, Richard looking irresolute, and Emma pouting, for Mrs. Sharpe had pinned her faith on her new friend, and declared she would move likewise. Dire confusion indeed! With weekly dances at the Hôtel Louis d'Or, with promise of races and Carnival, with receptions on Sundays and other days, and the Vidals launched so gayly on the current of a wholly new experience, intoxicating in its airy charm of novelty, it was provoking to be torn away. A convenient peg had been discovered whereon to hang the mantle of further delay: there was to be a charity ball of surpassing magnificence, and a second

Worth dress had been ordered for it by the indulgent bridegroom. Would not Miss Nancy wait? No, Miss Nancy could not wait.

"Then I shall go also," exclaimed Mrs. Sharpe, firmly.

"Oh, had you better do so?" cried Miss Nancy, involuntarily: she was thinking of the Louis d'Or, and the Worth toilets, and the new acquaintances made so freely by the young people. Nor was she relieved by the alacrity with which Richard Vidal consigned his mother-in-law to her keeping, promising fervently to follow next week, just as he had waited in Paris.

The train moved away, and Mrs. Sharpe, taking out her ticket, again surveyed it.

"I don't care! I am glad that I did buy it," she said. "If any thing goes wrong, it will be all Cook's fault for not having an agent at Nice this year. Why, that man has a deal on his conscience; for, after passing us along so charmingly from Paris to the South, every official bowing low in recognition of the little green book, he might know that people would buy some sort of a through ticket to save trouble; if not his own, then the next best thing."

"I prefer to keep my trunk with me, and buy a ticket at each station; although I would have taken Cook if such accommodation were to be obtained," rejoined Miss Nancy.

Mrs. Sharpe, on the contrary, had purchased the ticket of a French company, and her luggage had been consigned to the Grande Vitesse, to be examined at Rome. The billet furnished ample opportunity for study. It consisted of a neat volume of three pages, with such preliminaries on the outside as these lines:

Service Internationale entre la France et l'Italie.

Servizio Internazionale fra la Francia e l' Italia.

Chemins de fer de Paris à Lyons, et la Méditerranée de la Haute Italie, Romains.

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1. *Classe.*—Agence de Paris—Succursale de Nice.
Agenzia di Parigi—Succursale di Nizza.

BILLET DIRECT.
De Nice à Rome par Ventimille, Gênes, et Pise.

Prix, } 82 frs. 50.
Prezzo, }

Valable pendant 10 jours, avec trois arrêts facultatifs sur le parcours Italien de Ventimille à Rome, au choix de Voyageur.

"Ah, you will have the ordeal of examination on the frontier, while I shall escape," added Mrs. Sharpe, with malicious glee, and folded again her lengthy document.

At Monaco the train paused to deliberately disgorge the majority of its freight of human beings in a dispersing crowd on the platform — the Belgian gambler, with rifle and powder-flask for the pigeon-shooting; the English gambler, in tweed, with a dogged expression; the dapper French gambler, small and with absinthe-drinker stamped on sharpened features; the Polish gambler, sallow and lank; the cosmopolitan gambler, hook-nosed, with huge black mustache, lean, hungry, alert, preying on all the world. Fresh German girls; tawdry provincials gazing stupidly at Paris fashions; the *prima donna* of the period, with velvet train sweeping the ground, silk stockings and high-heeled shoes mincingly apparent, and audacious hat, made the curious contrasts discoverable in all great fields of life. Diamonds (paste), finery, vice, flaunting riches, and pinching, disreputable poverty, all hastened to one golden goal.

Turning, with eyes refreshed and senses purified, to nature once more, Miss Nancy found the Riviera charming beyond power of description in the parting glimpse of mountains and sea.

"Love and remember us," breathed the hills from purple depths and ravines, where the light seemed imprisoned among heights draped in vines, citron, myrtle, and aloe, crowned by gray churches and white convent walls nestling in the sun-steeped hollows.

"Love and remember me," echoed the sea in myriad minor tones, lapping rocky promontories, and stealing into many a bay and inlet, with break of white foam and emerald-green waves. Does departure give additional richness to the sunset? The rock masses were amber-yellow in the red light which flooded the sky and sea, streaming over the shore a warm tide of effulgence, and then, meeting the already blue, cold shadow of the mountains, died in that embrace with might and death. Along the curve of shore Monaco, bathed in amethyst mist, stretched an arm of rock out into the sea, which glittered like a liquid jewel with the softest rose sheen melting to pearl on the horizon, and deepening to topaz nearer land. Breaks of dismal tunnel alternated with glimpses of green vineyards, stretches of water, and bold headlands, dark, rich-brown at the base, succeeded by ingulfing darkness of tunnel again. These rapid changes had the tantalizing attraction of a kaleidoscope, ever shifting form and color, or the glow of a painted window set in the gloom of a cathedral wall.

Mrs. Sharpe hated tunnels; and the Vidals, with malice prepense, had assured her that each of these excavations between Nice and Genoa was in a very shaky condition, being propped up with beams. She now clutched Miss Nancy to affirm,

"I felt the train grate on the track. Oh! oh! the atmosphere is stifling with sulphur and smoke! They never publish the accidents which happen on the Continent in the newspapers, you know."

Did Miss Nancy wish that Mrs. Sharpe

had tarried at Nice to guard her children from the wiles of the enemy, fashion? No; she was used to the lady's peculiarities, liked her, and found support in her companionship. Perhaps one of the chief pleasures yet yielded by Uncle Simon's money was to have bought Mrs. Sharpe a certain tea-cup of Dresden ware which she admired, for a Christmas gift. Mrs. Sharpe made tea in her own dominions of an afternoon—all the ladies did in the Pension Cosmopolitaine—and Miss Nancy had it somewhat on her conscience that her friend, while preparing her a second portion on one occasion, had been the victim of an accident. Mrs. Sharpe's Etna had blown up in the most vicious manner, rebelling from slavery, and taken off a part of her left eyebrow. Then Miss Nancy had bought the cup, there being something so delightful and inconsequent in making such a purchase without reference to cost.

Tunnels, mountain depths, a cove brimming like a crystal cup filled with palest blue waters, and the coast gradually changed to sudden blackness, while the sea still glowed with the waning glories of day. Thus the frontier at Ventimiglia was reached; most wretched of stations, with a gloomy building looming up in the growing dusk suggestive of the old form of surveillance, loss of temper, and suspicious investigation of passports, as if each foreigner must be a criminal in disguise.

"I have no baggage to be investigated," said Mrs. Sharpe, descending in triumph from the railway-carriage.

Miss Nancy felt a little heart-sinking of doubt; perhaps Mrs. Sharpe had been right, and she all wrong. Absorbed in this misgiving, she had shown her ticket in a flurry of haste, and was pushing her way toward the waiting officials, when she was arrested by a cry:

"Miss Ha-awse! What does this creature want?"

Mrs. Sharpe had been detained by the ticket-inspector, while all the other passengers filed into the waiting-room. Miss Nancy, skurrying back, demanded in faltering Italian to know what was amiss. The inspector, a man of stupid aspect, seemed at first smitten by paralysis at sight of Mrs. Sharpe's truly imposing *billet;* then he fumbled wildly, read, and reread the pages helplessly.

"Ask him to take it home for the evening, to peruse at his leisure. We can wait," said Mrs. Sharpe, her voice tremulous with anger.

This sarcasm was lost on the guard, and Miss Nancy, with frantic combination of English and French, could no more move him to haste than the grim building with its blackened roof. Finally he tore the middle leaf half out, then hesitated, and, as well as Miss Nancy could make out, announced an intention of keeping the *billet* altogether.

"No, no!" cried both ladies in agitated chorus.

The guard folded the *billet*, and walked along the platform; they followed protesting, and were relieved to discover that he only intended to submit it to the *chef de gare*, a stout, military individual, who blinked affably, and restored it.

Leaving Mrs. Sharpe to recover her composure, and have her bag marked, Miss Nancy sped in search of her trunk, valuable moments having been already wasted by the unforeseen delay. Oh, yes, there was still time. Two gloomy officials, standing in a large space, were gloating over a small heap of luggage which was scarcely sufficient compensation for many hours of *ennui* and idleness. Miss Nancy's trunk was brought in as she appeared. The first official gazed at her beneath heavy, beetling brows, and demanded,

"Madame, have you cigars or tobacco to declare?"

Miss Nancy smiled; the ordeal would be an easy one if these questions were in the form.

"No, I do not smoke, monsieur."

The second officer, stooping to chalk her trunk, raised himself erect, regarded her with surly animosity, and demanded her keys. Simple Miss Nancy! if instead of protestations you had bribed the expectant official just at that critical moment. Perhaps the lack of previous fees that day had imbittered his disposition. Miss Nancy was such a suspicious-looking personage traveling alone, that, with the most provoking and agonizing deliberation, the officer took every article from the trunk, peered between the folds of dresses, and tapped the very bottom and sides. He had a precedent to establish with the American traveling public, that his favors were not so lightly to be cast aside, and Miss Nancy was the victim. Vain to wring her hands as her most cherished possessions were thrust back in dire confusion, and the lid closed down! Vain to explain to those heartless sphinxes of the customs that she had been told no such ordeal was considered necessary in the present day!

The voice of Mrs. Sharpe was heard again from the platform bewailing the non-appearance of her comrade; the train was ready, and all the other passengers seated, while Miss Nancy still waited for the magic cross of chalk to be placed on the trunk. With what exasperating deliberation did the surly official complete his investigation, lingering over a lace veil as if regretful that there was no more to be done! The lid would not close.

"You will be left, Miss Hawse," cried Mrs. Sharpe, tapping on the window-pane.

Thus summoned, and with the awful vision of spending the night at Ventimiglia before her eyes, Miss Nancy went down on her knees, wrenched the bolts into place with Yankee vigor, snapped the lock, and said,

"Oh, how I wish I could speak Italian! Wouldn't I give you a piece of my mind, though?"

A man, made shadowy by long hair and masses of beard, stood on the platform, smoking his cigar deliberately, and in marked contrast with Mrs. Sharpe, whose agitation led her to follow the fat military *chef* about in urgent solicitation for the release of Miss Nancy, and a seat.

"He will not open a carriage; they are all reserved. Miss Nancy, have you any small money?"

The shadowy man flung away his cigar.

"Madam, he is bound to give us seats; only never attempt to hurry an Italian. All these people expect to be bribed by you Americans, because you throw your money away right and left," he said; and the fat *chef* finally unlocked a carriage, hopefully reserved for some grandee or a "tip" until the latest moment.

"Thank Heaven! we have got through that alive," said Mrs. Sharpe. "I suppose you see the advantage of having your trunks sent by Grande Vitesse now, and not opened here."

"Your ticket made an unfortunate delay," retorted Miss Nancy, with some tartness.

San Remo appeared through the softly gathering darkness with hint of shadowy gardens and outlined walls here and there; then Bordighera, still permitted to send its famous palms to St. Peter's, with olives, pines, and lemon-trees on the slopes. Ruined towers occasionally became visible, erected for protection against pirates, and more than once a deserted castle as weird and lonely as the imagination of Mrs. Radcliff need depict.

The shadowy man, with a pallid face set in the frame of superabundant hair, conversed in a low, monotonous tone, and took but a sombre view of life, due in part to his own shadowy self. He shuddered at the North, he despised the Riviera; to the diseased nature, weary of the strife with clinging illness, there is no rest on the broad, benignant earth; and he finally electrified his companions by observing, casually,

"No doubt you are going on to Italy, ladies. Then beware of malaria. Rome and Naples are vast cemeteries of your people, and especially of the young."

After that it seemed perfectly natural that the shadowy man should consult his guidebook, and where the darkness rested most profoundly on a little obscure station melt away into the night.

"Well, he is a cheerful companion," said Mrs. Sharpe. "I should like to employ him if I were visiting the Catacombs; but I must say, on a railroad with so many tunnels he makes the blood run cold."

Roccabruna; Eza; then Gogolito, birthplace of a certain great navigator, where a poor tavern is still shown as his cradle; then the city of Genoa, twinkling with lamps; and in the Piazza Acquaverde, Columbus, on marble pedestal rising toward the blue-domed heavens, sparkling with wintry stars, and set below with a wreath of lesser stars of gas. What need to tell how our travelers were immediately installed in a palace, with marble steps, marble corridors, marble apartments, vast and dimly lighted, and marble beds? Or how Mrs. Sharpe's courage failed her when consigned to one of these chambers, which would have served for a ball-room, and she, contemplating hangings like a funeral catafalque, illuminated by two feeble candles, begged to be allowed to bivouac in Miss Nancy's quarters, scarcely inferior in size, where dull portraits of men in armor, dames in Venetian lace and fur mantles, and one faded Madonna, gazed down from the walls with eyes rendered hollow and watchful by the shadows? What need further to detail how the ladies, making a tour of inspection, candle in hand, discovered a secret door behind the most cadaverous knight, and held solemn council together whether a chair, a pair of tongs, a wash-bowl, and a tin foot-bath, placed properly, might not interfere with the descent of midnight marauder by this ingress, and awaken the whole hotel?

The marauder did not come, awed by these preparations, and the night passed in peaceful slumber.

Bright, palatial, attractive Genoa! How doughty was your fame in olden time; celebrated as a harbor from remote antiquity; vast mart under the Romans for products of the Ligurian sea; a republic under a doge in the tenth century, and acquiring valuable possessions in the East, and rearing citizens who participated in the Crusades! What fierce wars you waged with your rivals, the Pisans and Venetians! Barred windows, city gates, and the massive door-ways, palazzi Rosso, Doria, Tursi, and Balbi still suggest days when the Doria and Spinola (Ghibellines) strove for supremacy with the Grimaldi and Fieschi (Guelphs); when Tuscany hurled the satire at its opponent on the shore: "Mare senza pesce; montagne senza alberi; uomini senza fede; e donne senza vergogna." How did you thrive after that sarcasm, standing to-day with broad *piazze* clean swept and white in the morning sunshine, and arcades surrounding the marketplace, filled with vegetable stalls and baskets?

Church and cathedral have sombre walls like fortresses still. Palaces, rich with mass-

ive carving; arches, revealing glimpses of court, stairway, garden, and gallery have the oddest familiarity. America boasts no such architecture. What is the link of resemblance? All Shakspearean stage-scenery and drop-curtains reproduce Genoa. Juliet leans on such a balcony as that on the corner of the square yonder; Desdemona descends such terraces—in pasteboard—to the stage, with yellow-satin sleeves to her gown, and white brocaded petticoat, as necessary accompaniments to the promenade. Bright, beautiful Genoa! needing only the velvet doublet, the silken hose, and the plumed hat of the gallant. Here are the narrow streets of the old town, in some cases mere broken flights of steps between the high buildings, or passages that seem cracks, the fissures of massive masonry; again expanding to sufficient width for one carriage to pass between rows of shops glittering with exquisite Genoese ware, some panes revealing pyramids of silvery frost-work, and others heaps of gold.

The first glimpse of the Italian is eminently picturesque, according to tradition; a cloak drapes his form in bandit guise, flying back gracefully over one shoulder. The women wear black veils on their heads in a wind piercingly cold, and shiver on the curbstone. Two priests with fine features may stand conversing together in a gate-way, one fair and mild in aspect, and the other of olive complexion, eager and quick in gesture and expression. In the square Cristoforo, imposing and dignified, supported by kneeling America, on the pedestal of ship prows, with allegorical figures of Religion, Wisdom, Geography, and Strength grouped below, Cristoforo gazing toward the harbor, the blue Mediterranean, and the America of the future, with roses blooming at his feet, blossoms unfolding, swaying softly and scattering perfume on the January day, not more fragile and fleeting than we at the base, owing so much to this marble man gazing ever toward the sea.

Next day Mrs. Sharpe and Miss Nancy were driven to Pegli, prepared to visit the noble Marquis of Pallavicini, with his gracious permission. The ladies were in good spirits, and proud of their own achievements in the purchase of filigree-work; and their carriage was a neat one, with glass windows, having a joint in the middle, which made it eminently desirable to support the top pane tenderly on a parasol. Nothing more was necessary to render Mrs. Sharpe's mood one of subdued hilarity than to explore dark little shops filled with old bits of bronze, copper pictures, coins, and worm-eaten frames, where she reveled in unheard-of bargains with the proprietors.

"I wish that we could import a little cheap public driving to America," she said. "Why the whole people do not rise *en masse* and demand a cab system, I can not divine. Two francs an hour for this carriage!"

"The coloring of the bay would seem unnatural in a picture," observed Miss Nancy, irrelevantly.

A black ship rested on the blocks of a shipyard, with a house of mellow pistachio-green tints in relief against bow and keel. Behind was the deep-blue of water sweeping away to a line of purple hills, their summits sharply cut glacier peaks rising toward the sky, and taking gradually a warmer glow from the sun until they resembled rosy, floating clouds.

The city ramparts and gates were passed; then succeeded a stretch of shore, houses decreasing, watch-towers and villas increasing, and then—the groves of Pegli. At the *café* the ladies alighted, and walked up the long avenue rising toward the spot where stood the unimpressive yellow mansion known as the Villa Pallavicini. The wind came, keen and bracing, from the hills; the bay sparkled, and broke into crisp ripples; roses, creamy yellow, as if sunshine had been garnered in their velvet petals, and dewy crimson, grew along the hedges, looped in sprays through the mass of shrubbery.

"How they used to talk about snow at Genoa, in Nice!" remarked Mrs. Sharpe. "These blooming roses look like the depths of arctic winter."

"The snow must melt rapidly in this fiery sun, so that the plants scarcely suffer," said Miss Nancy, mildly.

"Suffer! Japonica-trees look like snow, do they not? Why, the hotel proprietors in the Riviera get up those fibs to detain people longer, my dear, and then simpletons like ourselves believe them."

"Oh, do you think so?" said Miss Nancy, much impressed by her friend's penetration.

The square, yellow mansion lost insignificance when the marble steps were ascended, and the broad marble balcony, with its tesselated pavement, was reached, commanding a view of hills, city, and harbor. Here was the retreat of the Italian noble in the midsummer heat. Sheltered from the tropical noonday in these cool, shaded halls, he strolled forth languidly in the moonlight, or beneath the stars on this balcony, to inhale the sea-breeze, all the hours of darkness fragrant with the beauty of a world over which night had drawn a veil. The gardener was a stumpy man, with bronzed skin, gold rings in his ears, and shrewd, twinkling eyes. Moreover, they were in no danger of getting lost, while in any labyrinth they were furnished with such a clue as the odor of garlic exhaled by the guide with every respiration. From the terrace paths led to depths of shrubbery so rich in perfected verdure that the white road seemed to cleave waves of a green sea on either side, and the transition from yellow-walled villa, with snowy

marble terrace and glittering sea, in a step to the twilight of overhanging boughs and interlacing branches, formed a contrast the more charming that it was unexpected. Occasionally the glorious brightness of the Italian day parted the dusky foliage, as if with merry, wayward fingers, and the sunshine fell on leaves of waxen surface in a golden rain as of distinct drops, brilliant and scintillating. Here grew the camphor-tree, with its aromatic scent; thickets of japonica, revealing carmine buds tightly rolled in a spiral form; tall, slender palms from Brazil, with fronds so delicate that they seemed mere penciled lines against the sky; cedar of Lebanon, draped in its ample, flowing mantle of green from top to root; and eucalyptus stripped of bark, with graceful crest, hope of Rome in the future, where the poor monks of the Campagna drink nauseous decoctions of it to ward off the deadly attack of malaria.

Miss Nancy was in a trance of delight. Loveliest forms of nature and art were all about her, blending to an exquisite whole; the murmur of flowing water came from every thicket; not a crest of the hill, not an angle of the path neglected to form perspective glimpses of the sea, or the hills rising, sere and grand, behind the city, the rocky surface being slaty gray, with lavender tints toward the summit, and on the highest peak were the ruins of a monastery. A triumphal arch spanned one avenue; farther on was a belvedere with floor of glistening tiles, and vista between the pillars of branching paths, where cushions of terra cotta, seemingly piled on the grass, and lounges of iron filigree, invited to repose, where the full beauty of statuary is best seen, with the natural background of trees and daylight softened by the shadows of passing clouds. In the peasant's house, rude, mossy, and dark, with a Virgin Mother hung on the wall, Miss Nancy had said,

"He is coming."

Two gentlemen had then advanced along the path, raised their hats courteously, and passed. Mrs. Sharpe was a trifle embarrassed: she had declared that if another carriage drove up the avenue, their own might do so also, until she had been restrained by the information that the other equipage held the proprietor. Here he was, then—the noble marquis in person, who received them in his Genoa paradise. Miss Nancy could not refrain from observing him with a pensive and speculative curiosity which may be permissible in a republican. He was a young man of slight build, and he wore the universal black "billicock" hat, which has been adopted by the whole civilized world, certainly without reference to becomingness. Miss Nancy would rather have beheld him in armor, with a bright sash knotted over his shoulder, and a long rapier by his side, or in a robe of velvet, fur-bordered, a parchment roll in his hand.

Faith in the gardener with ear-rings, garlic-perfumed, alone led Mrs. Sharpe down to an entrance guarded by an iron-barred portal, which he unlocked with a huge key; and thence extended the caves, a labyrinth of artificial rock-work, where stalagmites already form, nature aiding the fantastic labor of art; where four hundred men wrought for eight years to complete these fairy grottoes, these casements draped in vines, these subterranean depths of profound blackness. Mrs. Sharpe was becoming bewildered and alarmed, despite the voluble re-assurance of the guide, when a pale light glimmered over the cave, most weird and strange in effect, a fringe of crystals glittered above the last arch like the white edge of snow on a precipice; the light grew to pallid green, flooding the rocks with broken sparkles and ripples, and they became aware of water below, where an old man stood up in a graceful boat awaiting them. The emerald transparency of the water made it appear less palpable than a liquid element, but rather a soft vapor curling in beneath the low aperture of entrance, where the old man in the shallow boat was suspended by magic, floating in this delicate mist. For a moment they were dumb; the shallow boat swayed, the old man — stunted and crook-backed — held an oar poised, from which drops fell slowly like jewels, one by one, with musical splash.

When persuaded that the transparent emerald medium was actually water, and the stunted oarsman not Charon, Mrs. Sharpe reluctantly stepped into the boat, and they emerged on a mimic lake.

"I call this lovely," cried the good lady. "I should think that our city parks at home might learn something here."

The little sheet of water was bordered with banks ornamented with a Turkish kiosk, surmounted by a dome resembling a golden orange; a Chinese pagoda, gay with strings of flower-like bells; and an obelisk, somewhat new in aspect, as if placed there for the purpose of mocking Miss Nancy with its hieroglyphics. In the centre of the lake rose a Grecian temple, shrouding its deity in purest marble, while Tritons rose from the wave to spout with expectant conch-shells. Tiny gilded bridges spanned the stream, and Flora invited the disembarked to her shores with wealth of flower parterres, herself expectant on the brink, while Psyche hovered behind, like a cameo on background of *vert antique*. Here was an interior of most lavish design, floor of mosaic, windows of stained glass catching the glow of yellow sunshine, and ceiling resembling an inverted Sèvres dish of deep blue, with exquisite figures in relief. What a retreat in which to read the volumes of the

library in the alcove when life was sinking, pulseless, beneath the drowsy heat of August noonday!—verses of Tasso, Petrarch, or Alfieri; and when eyelids drooped, freighted with the languor of nature inclining to dreams, a glance down the sweep of flower-bordered path to the silvery lake, its central temple outlined in pure contrast against the rocky arches of the grotto, the steep rise of hill beyond, might lull to sweeter repose.

As the ladies paused on one of the bridges, a second boat shot out of the grotto; the noble marquis was following with his friend, also making the tour of the lake. Between the bridges was a golden hoop in which a chair was suspended, pendulum fashion. The gardener, smiling good-naturedly, invited the ladies to swing.

"Why, it is a swing, and so pretty!" exclaimed Miss Nancy, admiringly.

The boat of the marquis paused on the lake, its occupants watching the strangers with a certain amount of interest.

"Perhaps he means it for a polite act," said our heroine, hesitatingly, as the gardener renewed his solicitations.

Had the gardener received orders from the waiting boat? Possibly Italian ladies did swing, although it was rather a childish amusement, and—Miss Nancy seated herself in the chair, smiling affably. The pendulum moved in the golden hoop. Mrs. Sharpe withdrew to one side, and, as she did so, suddenly beheld her friend veiled in spray. What had happened? Countless little water-pipes were unloosed by Miss Nancy's movement, liquid threads proceeded from the gravel, from behind the plants, enemies in ambush, and wept down upon her devoted head from the hoop rim: the whole space was a labyrinth of concealed jets capable of keeping up a cross-fire to a considerable distance.

Poor Miss Nancy, astonished and bewildered, gasped, and sprung out at the risk of dislocating an ankle. Mrs. Sharpe screamed loudly, and received a spray full in her face. The boat glided away, and methinks there was a smile on the countenance of the marquis. Mrs. Sharpe was simply speechless with indignation. Miss Nancy tried to make the best of it, and the gardener officiously brushed her damp raiment as if it were the best joke in the world; yet methinks also that the fee received by that same gardener at the gates was considerably influenced as to size by the prank.

"Perhaps the Italians think this funny," Mrs. Sharpe remarked, dryly. "Every part of the world must have its own idea of fun, I suppose."

"Let us remember the privilege of visiting the lovely spot," said Miss Nancy, somewhat ruefully. "Perhaps they are not used to seeing ladies alone, and therefore did not respect us."

This view of the case was peculiarly exasperating to Mrs. Sharpe.

"If they do not recognize a lady when they see her in these countries, tacking a man to her train will not make her any more of a one," she retorted, vehemently.

A military funeral was transpiring as they returned to their hotel. The hearse, with its sable plumes and ornaments of oxidized silver revealing within a velvet pall covering the hero, and with his cocked hat resting on top, stood before a time-stained old building, from which the heads of women, tied in silk handkerchiefs, peered forth from upper windows. Opposite was a long stretch of chrome-tinted wall fringed with human beings; boys blooming, like Murillo's beggars, munched chestnuts, and tossed down the shells; an old man, skinny and wrinkled, wore a peaked brown hood that showed a vivid scarlet lining.

Now the martial music swells to a mournful dirge; the soldiers march in a desultory fashion, arms reversed; their officers, magnificent-looking men in blue and silver, twirl their mustaches, and glance from side to side. The hearse moves, preceded by priests in embroidered vestments; an acolyte bearing a huge gilt cross, and a band of the Misericorde with candles, guard the corpse. The populace streams in between the ranks, laughing and chattering fishermen in red night-caps, trim cadets from school, and the figures now familiar to New York curbstones, brown velveteen coat, yellow handkerchief around the brow, and black beard. Heads peer from the grated windows at the show, the soldiers march, the music rises and falls, the hearse moves to the church guarded by the hideous black brotherhood.

"The Garden of Paradise must be like that," said Miss Nancy, thoughtfully, that evening. "Trees of graceful symmetry, perennial flowers, harmonious forms, and that rain of golden sunshine."

"Without the water-jets, let us hope," added Mrs. Sharpe, with a grimace. "My cravat was as wet as a rag; and if ever I wished to slap a man in the face, it was that gardener."

CHAPTER XIX.

GALILEO'S LAMP.

In the very depths of the tunnel the grinding sound of revolving wheels, the rattle and jolt of rapid motion had abruptly ceased—the train had stopped. For a moment every body held his breath in suspense of awful silence; then a babble of questioning voices broke loose in unavailing inquiries. What had happened? Nobody knew; the fact alone was fearfully apparent that the train stood still, terribly still, and might either have been hurled from the track or

suffer collision with another train before they again emerged into day.

Miss Nancy looked fearfully across at Mrs. Sharpe, who had always threatened to immediately expire if detained in a tunnel. The lady, now that the emergency had come, did nothing of the sort; she was so rigidly quiet that her companion feared she had fainted, until a stealthy movement toward her pocket for a lurking smelling-bottle revealed the vitality of life. The train waited, the babble of voices continued, the moments lengthened to a half-hour in the dreadful horror of such a situation. Miss Nancy shrunk in her own corner of the railway-carriage, a cold dew started on her forehead, and she prayed for deliverance from such a death as to be buried in this hole, feeling the oppression of the heavy, damp atmosphere already closing around her.

Oh, blessed sense of relief in a first impulse of returning motion imparted to all the carriages, one by one, when the train finally moved slowly out into the light once more! The locomotive had discovered the supply of water to be diminishing, had detached itself with just sufficient steam to reach the next station in advance, had imbibed a fresh quantity, and sped back into the tunnel once more. Perhaps in no other country besides Italy could such a measure be taken with impunity, while here extreme deliberation on railways insures safety. The remaining trains would not have objected to waiting all day for that one detained in the tunnel.

Daylight restored Mrs. Sharpe's power of speech. She tore open her cloak at the throat, and put her head out of the window, at the risk of having it taken off by some projection.

"I knew it would happen!" she said, looking at Miss Nancy, triumphantly. "If we had been run into and entirely smashed up, not a word would have been published about the accident. I suppose we might have been missed, in time."

Miss Nancy breathed a sigh of relief and gratitude; while Mrs. Sharpe's unexpected docility in a real emergency had not a small share of influence in bracing her own nerves. Marvelous transition from gloom to radiant noon! The curving outline of shore was visible in advance, laved by gentle ripples; distant cliffs stood out in purple hues, then melted to tender blue, as if the atmosphere were a soft, enveloping, gauzy tissue, and these were in turn replaced by other bold headlands. The sea was silvery white, and the line between pearly water and pearly horizon was marked only by little boats floating with their shadowy lateen sails spread. On the other side towered the mountains crowned by almost inaccessible villages, marked by spires and the gray olives, always with that smoky softness of verdure curling up their flanks. Tunnels again, longer, darker, more frightful, followed by a glimpse of water, a rim of mountains, a passing train crowded with soldiers in red caps, then a swifter rush into obliterating darkness as compensation for all the charm of the scene.

Fold after fold of green slope and rocky precipice; towns on the strand with narrow streets and tall houses built to exclude the summer sun; Nervi, with its lemon-groves; Bay of Rapallo, with its surrounding fertile plains, olive-oil traffic, and pilgrim church of Madonna di Montallegro; Lavagna, with a ship now building, ancestral seat of the counts Freschi, where was born Sinibaldo de' Fieschi, Pope Innocent IV. (1243), the powerful opponent of Frederick II. Roman aqueducts were visible in this old country, tilled since time out of mind; ruins on the hills with daylight shining through dismantled casements; dried water-courses spanned with bridges; then a break, and Spezia on its bay, with the Carrara mountains, the Alpi Aquane rising behind. Lovely Spezia, with limpid wavelets breaking on the shingle, and a calm sea, silvery white in the veiled sunshine of the balmy afternoon, a sea giving no hint of storm-gusts, yet capable of drowning the poet Shelley so many years ago!

What a leaf of history each of these towns might unfold if studied! Here are Sarzana, birthplace of Nicholas V., who founded the Vatican library, where the Bonaparte family resided before Corsica became their home, a prize once held by Lorenzo de' Medici, and wrested from him by Charles VIII. of France; and the ruins of Luna, an Etruscan city, fallen to decay under the Roman Empire. The white cliffs and gorges gleaming in the opening of the hills are the marble quarries whence comes the *marino statuario*. Beyond Spezia the track wends inland, and all is changed.

"At least we can have no tunnels here," said Mrs. Sharpe, after consulting the guide-book. "As I am a Christian, we have passed through thirty-eight since we left Genoa, when I thought that horror was over on reaching the city. Miss Hawse, I believe you knew it all the while, and never said a word."

"I certainly read that we had quite a number more," admitted Miss Nancy.

Mrs. Sharpe sniffed her *vinaigrette*.

"That is always the way with you self-contained people! Keep every thing to yourselves, and then make a merit of it."

"How will you endure Mont Cenis?" inquired Miss Nancy.

"I never mean to endure it. I will go home by sea," retorted Mrs. Sharpe, with prophetic wisdom.

The sun had set behind the range of abrupt peaks, leaving the clear sky tinged with daffodil hues. The land was a level

waste of swamp, with leafless trees, and the blue mist of miasma rising on the still evening air. Pools of brown water choked with plants varied the expanse of brown earth, with peasant huts of the same color, which resembled hay-cocks from their rude thatching. The dreariness of a stone building, moldy, with a flight of steps outside, and a fire blazing on a wide blackened hearth, seen through a vista of open doors and windows, was in keeping with all nature. A donkey stood before a ruined tower with a bag on its back. A little girl, with a yellow handkerchief over her head, which seemed to have caught a faint reflection of color from the daffodil sky, paused by a ditch to gaze at the passing train with large, melancholy eyes. What did the train mean to the lonely little maiden? Her shadow flickered on the brown water, the reeds of margin bowed and swayed, the hills grew darker in the sad twilight. In the distance was a town on the hill, built close together for strength in by-gone times; and from the towers floated the vesper bells echoing, answering, chiming in sweet unison—the voice of this desolation.

"Talk about sunny Italy!" exclaimed Mrs. Sharpe. "Can the dweller in these thatched huts, beside the brown waters reeking with fever vapor, do worse in America? For my part, I no longer wonder that they emigrate with their hand-organs and monkeys and big eyes, and I shall always give them pennies, too, after seeing their homes."

As Pisa was approached, Mrs. Sharpe produced that ticket with a timidity entirely foreign to her assurance in starting; she even held it with the aspect of fearing it might explode. Genoa had set its seal upon the leaf in questioning mood. Now Pisa was so much impressed with its value, that the official wished to pass Mrs. Sharpe along to Rome at midnight, alone and friendless; only allowing her to escape into the town instead, after Miss Nancy, with extreme reluctance. Oh for rescuing Cook and the little green book!

Pisa was to Miss Nancy, coming from the Riviera, the portal of Italian art. How mild the atmosphere, the sky dappled with soft cloudlets which promised rain, and quiet akin to desertion brooding over the empty streets! Her heart went out to the beautiful old town extended along the Arno banks; the peaceful sunshine of centuries seeming to rest on the river surface, on the once famous palaces grated and barred, on the cathedral, Campanile, and the silence of Campo Santo beyond. Here is supposed to linger that coy goddess known as Cheapness, but surely she veils her face to the casual traveler, and may be only lured from her retreat by the gradual acquaintance of a winter sojourn. Just as the blended tones of a coarse-featured old cicerone below become refined to airy echoes of angelic voices beneath the baptistery dome, like the memory of the spot, so the calm sunshine, the brooding quiet, enshrine the old age of a once proud republic left deserted amidst its treasures.

In no other place would the strange, solemn Campo Santo's erection be as fitting as in this Pisa, where Archbishop Ubaldi, after the loss of the Holy Land in 1188, brought the fifty-three loads of earth from Jerusalem for the dead to repose in; where Giovanni Pisano completed the structure in the Gothic-Tuscan style; arched windows of beautiful tracery overlook the green quadrangle, with Roman and Etruscan tombs below. Mohammed gazes up from purgatory toward heaven in the faded paintings of the wall, where human forms seem to writhe in intricacies all the more perplexing that portions have peeled off in the damp; and, amidst ancient carvings and Coptic inscriptions, Niccolo Pisano himself stands in marble, austere and frowning. The space of greensward in the centre flanked by the stone in slender columns and delicate coping lay in sunshine, but a chill gust swept the galleries as if stirring the sacred dust with some intelligence of the living in the very footsteps ringing on the flags, where all would presently be silence again.

"It is almost a pity that any thing so lovely as the Leaning Tower should be wrought into alabaster toys, and sown broadcast over the universe," observed Mrs. Sharpe. "Why, the colonnades of the separate stories make me laugh only to think how often I have run a pin between the tiny pillars of mine on the centre-table at home."

They were standing outside the cathedral, and the elder lady further opined that one would shoot from the perpendicular, at least, in the ascent of the Campanile, which she was disposed to respectfully decline.

"Now we must see Galileo's Lamp," said Miss Nancy, with excitement; and they entered the cathedral.

There it swung in the nave, the bronze lamp of Galileo, set in motion inadvertently before the master's watchful eye while mass was transpiring. Was time also then set in motion? Rich temple of worship, the gate to the loftier magnificence of St. Peter's, this cathedral. For the first time in her life, Miss Nancy saw altars of lapis-lazuli, sienna-red, and wrought leaves of pure white marble; pavement of mosaic from the palace of Hadrian; the sixty-five ancient Greek and Roman columns captured by the Pisans in war —for the shrine was erected after a naval battle near Palermo in 1063; and the bronze door of the twelfth century, Crociera di S. Ranieri, in the south aisle. The magnificence of the edifice was a reality, and if she closed her eyes it did not vanish away; space became limitless above her head until ar-

rested by the flat-coffered ceiling, richly gilded, and the vaulted aisles with *triforia* above them, which cross the transept to the choir. The gigantic Christ of Cimabue, in mosaic, gazed down as if none could escape the all-seeing eye; while stairways wound up to galleries once used by the women, and tiny mysterious doors were visible far above the great altar. The façade, adorned with columns and arches in the lower stories, and four open galleries in the upper diminishing in length before the eye, and the imposing choir, held Miss Nancy spell-bound.

The awe inspired by height and breadth alone in a cathedral, in which the details of decoration are merged — lost, like minor chords in the full harmony of an organ — when entered for the first time can not be overestimated, and must be an impression forever new. Porphyry columns designed by Michael Angelo; lovely St. Agnes of Andrea del Sarto; the genius of Niccolo Pisano, traceable in wondrous carving; Giovanni di Bologna; Christ on the Cross; and bronze angels, lustrous marbles, mosaics, ebony; and beneath the gleam of golden ceiling Galileo's lamp, swaying through all the revolutions of years.

These Miss Nancy studied, one by one, and fain would have lingered longer alone and silent in the place, fascinated by that gigantic Saviour of the dome, and his all-pervading presence, which gave sanctity to the church in the reverence of the artist's intention, however singular the fulfillment. This was the Cimabue, father of painting, who groped with the first elements, as it were, and created those angular Holy Families, mere drapery relieved by a face, hands, and feet at suitable distances, according to prescribed rules observable in the human body, which were borne in procession of delighted worshipers to the altars they were intended to adorn. A Roman colony, a fighting republic, a crumbling old town robbed of other possessions, but cherishing still the beautiful group of buildings in the Piazza del Duomo.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, Mrs. Sharpe paused on the corner of a street, and read a sign over a shop with a reflective aspect. The two ladies had been very good, as Mrs. Sharpe expressed it, in the matter of buying up Pisa that day. They had steadfastly resisted the charm of tiny horses, so delicately carved in alabaster that they seemed formed of snow which would presently melt; sturdy oxen dragging carts; Graces poised on tiptoe; Cupids creeping out of fluted shells; and tablets with the transparency of gum-camphor. They had confined their collection of photographs to a dozen or so, and set their faces against modern bronzes. Now Mrs. Sharpe paused at the corner, and surveyed the shop, impelled to enter by its very dinginess of aspect. The street was narrow, and wholly obstructed farther on by an old belfry tower of deep chocolate-brown tint, while the neighboring walls were soft gray and yellow.

SIG. CASTRONI,
Via St. Frediano 11,
Proprietario, Maggiori d' Antichità.

The door had glass panes, which served as a show-window for the display of a saint, colored faintly on ivory, with a nail through her forehead, and a Madonna greenish with age. This door showed a hospitable desire to swing open—with the warning of a cracked bell — on rusty hinges, to the imminent risk of overturning a tray of majolica-ware on a rickety table. The interior was scarcely more than an arch, white-ceiled, with walls of chrome-yellow, and stone floor with a gutter-like depression in the middle. Pictures lined the place, in some instances time-darkened to indistinguishable obscurity; a maroon curtain draped a second sunken door in the background; stiff chairs, richly carved; crowded cabinets, heaped with enamels, coins, cameos, and china. In the centre of the place was a counter containing a silver Cupid in bass-relief; medals of queens; the pearl ear-rings, set with rubies, of the Tuscan peasantry; Byzantine saints; carvings of the Madonna in gilded shrines; an exquisite figure of St. Francis Xavier in pure ivory, with a halo about the head, and delicately chiseled hands folded over the crucifix.

The proprietor was invisible, a guileless faith being reposed in the honesty of the American traveling public. Several urchins gathered in the street outside—one bearing earthen jugs of water, suspended on a hoop, from the fountain — as if the aspect of Mrs. Sharpe and Miss Nancy were peculiarly interesting to their youthful observation. Mrs. Sharpe immediately yielded to the fascination of the spot. She raised a cloud of dust by dragging forth an Oriental cimeter from beneath a pile of rugs; she knocked over boxes and frames in reaching after unattainable miniatures; and it was a pleasant sight to see her pause before a casket containing seals, snuff-boxes, and huge rings which might have been worn on giant thumbs, fingering these relics lovingly. Suddenly she became mute: she had raised a corner of the maroon curtain, and was peering beyond.

Miss Nancy did not heed the movement of her companion: she had discovered a canvas in one corner which absorbed her attention. Plain Miss Nancy, from Briarbush, in a gray traveling-dress, stood with a thrill of wonder and delight before the portrait of a patrician who claimed her homage with a certain regal grace. Time could not dim the rich coloring of that portrait, the charm of the eloquent face, the magnificence of the

costume; the obscurity of a little shop in a narrow street, instead of lofty palace hall domed with frescos and panneled with satin, could not hide the woman who sparkled like a brilliant amidst the dross of much imitation. A small, elegant head framed in powdered hair, well poised on a firmly molded white throat; cheek and chin softly rounded by youth's dimpling touch; and eyes, dark, limpid, unfathomable, gazing down on the spectator with the calm *hauteur* of one placed on immeasurable heights above, yet commanding admiration. Miss Nancy looked at the dark eyes which absorbed the whole interest. She no longer saw the swelling bust shielded by Venetian lace, the bodice of gold brocade, the ruby velvet mantle clasped on the shoulder with an aigret, the taper fingers extended and merging into wrist and arm, the flesh which the masters made so real — almost to the touch. Pride chilled her sympathy, and yet there was some shadow of mournful appeal in the expression, as if this fate of oblivion was foreseen. The lady on the wall spoke to Miss Nancy, and she could not resist the appeal.

"The school of Paolo Veronese, and an original," said a voice in Italian.

The proprietor stood at her elbow, regarding her calmly. He was a handsome man, with dark beard and classical nose, and that dignified gravity observable among the Italians.

"Oh, who was she?" demanded Miss Nancy, a little flush of enthusiasm burning in her cheeks.

"Ah, one of the Medici, from a villa near Florence."

She dared not ask the price, and went on, summoned by Mrs. Sharpe, who was greatly excited. That lady emerged from behind the curtain clutching a panel. When she saw the proprietor she endeavored to control her elation, and bowed to him affably.

"They say you should never look pleased with any thing in Italy if you intend to buy," she whispered.

As if the proprietor, with his grave, handsome face, did not understand her perfectly well, despite his ignorance of the English language! Mrs. Sharpe had found a picture of St. Gregory, in mild and somewhat stiff youth, with a blonde beard, a halo about his head, and pen poised as if listening to the dove hovering above and directing his inspiration.

"Giotto," said the proprietor.

"Of course; I do not need to be told that," returned Mrs. Sharpe, triumphantly. "It belongs to the early days of art, and as such is most interesting."

Miss Nancy could only glance wistfully over her shoulder at the Medici princess glowing on the opposite wall. This time she read a new expression in the wonderful eyes; a flash of anger seemed to summon her back. Then ensued one of those intervals of bargaining in which ladies take peculiar delight. Mrs. Sharpe was especially proud of her skill.

"It is naught, saith the buyer, and goeth away, and boasteth," often applied to Mr. Vidal's mother-in-law.

With the aid of paper and pencil, Gregory the Great was found to be valued at fifty francs by the owner. This reasonable demand encouraged Miss Nancy to falteringly inquire the value of the Medici beauty. One hundred francs. A court beauty for twenty dollars!

"Offer him half," advised Mrs. Sharpe, promptly.

But the calm Pisan would not take half the sum.

"Then we must walk out. That is the way," said Mrs. Sharpe, *sotto voce*, and laying aside Gregory with feigned indifference. The courteous proprietor bowed low, as if he never expected to see them again in this world, and suffered them to depart without a murmur. Mrs. Sharpe was first aghast, and then indignant. These were the tactics in which she had been instructed with special reference to Italy, and they had signally failed. They proceeded a square in silence, then Miss Nancy halted.

"I am going to buy the portrait, anyway. One hundred francs!" she said, with great determination.

"I will not do any thing so ridiculous as to go back and have the man laugh in my face," affirmed Mrs. Sharpe. "Still, if you have a mind to offer him forty francs for Gregory, I will take it."

Accordingly Miss Nancy returned, and again the urchins gathered about the door. Gregory had disappeared; the proprietor was sorting his coins and medals with great diligence. Who so amazed as he to behold Miss Nancy returning? The court lady descended from the wall—she was too ancient to be rolled; and on the strength of this purchase the proprietor graciously sacrificed Pope Gregory for forty-five francs.

Subtle charm of possession! Miss Nancy tried again to read the court lady's dark eyes with the aid of a candle before she went to bed that night. She had claimed her homage, commanded her to rescue her from the obscure little shop, even though the princess went across seas, and Miss Nancy had obeyed.

"One of the house of Medici, crafty, arrogant, turbulent, and magnificent in the old days of Florentine supremacy," mused Miss Nancy. "Were you a Venetian bride, bringing new influence to that dark line? Were you a daughter of Casimo or Fernando? Where did you live, and how did you die, I wonder?"

The shadow of a smile seemed to ripple across the face from rosy arched lips to oval

check, the faintest reflection of cynicism, disdain, amusement; it might have been the flicker of the candle flame. Fame that was never to die, beauty and grace that were to have been rendered imperishable by loyal chronicler, or court poet—this was the end of it all: the dark corner of a little Pisa shop, and ultimate purchase by a foreign woman from an unknown New World. Miss Nancy held the candle, and thought about it. The rich red of the velvet mantle imparted a ruby glow to the figure, as if the artist had caught up the beautiful woman and draped her in his own genius, and thus prevented her from fading into the total obscurity of that subduing background, the centuries. Dead and forgotten, with name extinct! For her, Nancy Hawse, of Briarbush, the artist once dipped his brush into rainbow-blending hues of his palette, and the portrait had been rudely torn from palace wall, where none were left to value it. Ashes to ashes, Medici princess, with only that ruby mantle between you and the terrible background of dusky twilight, where the flash of gems, the peach-tints of youthful faces, are no longer discernible!

To start from Pisa at noon was to bring Mrs. Sharpe's *billet* to the surface once more, a necessity which both ladies viewed with grave concern. There was always variety in the ticket; the possessor knew what would next happen, and the reception met with at one city could be no criterion for another. Pisa at night had shown a disposition to pass Mrs. Sharpe on to Rome at twelve o'clock, in a train then forming. Pisa at noon mounted on the carriage-step jocosely, in the shape of a stout official with but one eye, and demanded, "Teeckets," in English. When the one eye was brought within range of Mrs. Sharpe's *billet*, silence ensued, while the official turned the leaves, and read every word of the fine print.

"Poor man!" remarked Mrs. Sharpe, grimly. "All these soldiers are kept waiting, too. There is a degree of power felt in checking Victor Emmanuel's army with that ticket. Goodness! has he finished? I thought he would be another hour."

Here the official lapsed into voluble Italian, in which it was impossible to decide from the energy of his manner whether he execrated or approved the system to which Mrs. Sharpe had fallen a victim; but as the soldiers were immediately stowed in third-class compartments, and other arrangements were completed, the ladies inferred that the railway at Pisa was able to resume its ordinary functions, Mrs. Sharpe's ticket having been read.

To approach Rome from Pisa at the season when Miss Nancy did, is to have the wings of one's fancy droop in the dismal reality. Hour after hour the train moved slowly along through a country that was one brown morass, dreary as the Dismal Swamp, more hopeless than Pilgrim's Slough of Despond. Evil odors rose from the stagnant waters; life had fled to the hills, where a town was occasionally visible, built on the highest peaks.

"If an accident happened here, we should be left all night in the ditch," said Mrs. Sharpe, carefully closing the windows, and producing a carbolic inhaler. "Nothing besides a few crows or such doleful night-birds would gather, I am sure. Oh, what a poisonous smell!"

At eleven o'clock the moon shone out from masses of cold, gray cloud on the lonely scene; the train increased speed perceptibly, suddenly; and, like a phantom, the Claudian Aqueduct was stretching, arch beyond arch, past the window; farther on were fragments of wall and broken, dismantled masses of building. All was very solemn, ghostly, and unreal.

Miss Nancy clasped her hands in her lap nervously, and strained her eyes for the next revelation. She almost felt the presence of father beside her, also watching, also yearning for the revelation of the capital of the world. In the minister's study how lovingly they had lingered together, parent and child, over the history of her grandeur, conquests, and fall! Never to be repeated those hours of communion in the old homestead, when they descended from animated discussion concerning the Golden House of Nero, to grandmother's twelve-o'clock dinner of beefsteak and apple-pie! Solemn, ghostly, and dim was the plain beneath the pale moon, peeping forth from cold gray clouds. Then a gleam of water, a fleeting vision of valley, and the flash of myriad lights where the Eternal City lay, framed in surrounding darkness, like her own dead past.

"What is that light?" asked Mrs. Sharpe, arousing from a nap.

"Rome!" said Miss Nancy, with sudden tears.

Did the father also see?

CHAPTER XX.

MISS NANCY REACHES THE PILGRIM'S SHRINE.

THE shrine had been reached at last! Miss Nancy had looked forward with such ardent longing all these years to the consummation, and, behold! she was unprepared to worship. What was anticipated? A serene sky, with the dome of St. Peter's forever outlined above all other objects; a Campagna always blooming with flowers and verdure; a Via Appia peopled with the ghostly armies issuing forth from the cradle of Romulus, or the pale shape of Zenobia led in triumphal pageant, stooping beneath the weight of her golden fetters.

What was the reality? Miss Nancy found dirty streets closely huddled about ruins which required breadth of space, the present clamoring for recognition above the voiceless, majestic past. How squalid the byways, the yawning, dismantled apertures once doors, the black interiors, the reeking pavements! How evil the odors issuing from the garbage-heaps of years, from dingy edifices such as that one where the old woman sat at the shop entrance, like a bloated spider in the darkness! How wretched and nauseating it all appeared, and, oh! the woful sense of disappointment, and the guilty feeling of being personally to blame for not falling into transports over the Eternal City.

Were these broken fragments, contracted to narrowest limits from boundless imagination, the Forums? Was that long building with windows actually the Capitol? Was that stream the Tiber, yellow, horribly sluggish in its course, as it flows past slimy, decaying walls? One would hesitate to dip in that river for purification; and was it such a great achievement for Horatius to swim across "in the brave days of old?" Where do temples and columns end, and modern masonry begin? Most dreary and chill the Pamfili-Doria drive, after the exquisite beauty of Pallavicini—leafless trees, sombre pines, grass sere and yellow, shrubbery bleak and unattractive, with the city indeed vast and imposing below, domes (all fashioned on the original Pantheon) rising here and there, and breaking the monotony of roofs.

For three weeks Miss Nancy had been asking herself these questions, while the rain fell and clouds lowered; asking and finding no answer until she climbed the many steps to the Raphael *loggie* of the Vatican, and paused before "The Transfiguration," and pondered over the curious history of Domenichino St. Jerome, when the cherubs rescued from the monks of Ara Cœli smiled down upon her from the clouds. She had read and rambled about, feeling a shocking levity of irreverence, induced by intimate association with Mrs. Sharpe. Once she had gone to bed at night utterly spent in the struggle to kindle enthusiasm at seemingly extinguished torches, saying, sadly, "I wish that I had never come. Then the ideal image would have always been cherished."

These desperate opinions she did not venture to utter aloud, but stupefied herself by the convicting evidence of all great minds. Châteaubriand assured her that one who had nothing else left in life should live in Rome: "The stones which crumble under his feet will speak to him, and even the dust which the wind raises under his footsteps will seem to bear with it something of human grandeur." Niebuhr delineated his profound emotions; Hawthorne stated that the heart-strings mysteriously attach themselves to the spot; Byron struck a chord of surpassing beauty in praise of the lone mother of dead empires; Goethe, Cardinal Wiseman, Dr. Arnold, Madame de Staël, Martin Luther, and hosts of other powerful intellects crushed Miss Nancy with the weight of their opinions, and she was dumb.

Let it not be supposed that Mrs. Sharpe was similarly reticent. She expressed her mind freely at all hours of the day.

The two friends had quarters near the cheerful Barberini Palace, on the charmed line of the Quirinal and Via di Quattrofontane, which malaria has never yet invaded, it is said.

Mrs. Sharpe's entry into the Eternal City could scarcely have been deemed a triumphal one, owing to that ticket. At her journey's end she had let it fall from her fingers like a burning coal, still affirming that all the vexations of her trip were attributable to Messrs. Cook, Son, & Jenkin, who had deluded her by their system, and then failed to have an agency at Nice. However, she was still disposed to flaunt in Miss Nancy's face the advantages of not taking charge of luggage as the one sagacious element in the measure.

Alas! Mrs. Sharpe's trunks were not in Rome. Her countenance fell as the dreadful fact became apparent, and possibly some chilling premonition of what fate had in store then assailed her. Adams Express Company would have delivered the luggage in twenty-four hours; but the Grande Vitesse was not Adams Express Company, nor did it claim as much as a cousinly relationship with that important system in America. Generosity forbade Miss Nancy to smile, and she offered Mrs. Sharpe a fresh cravat from her store, which was indignantly declined.

Two days passed, and the stranded traveler bought linen collars and cuffs, in dire affliction, with an expression of countenance intimidating to a shop-woman; four days elapsed, and she made inquiries concerning a new dress-maker; six days came and went, and she spent one whole morning in the most reckless purchases, a degree of temper in her extravagance. On the seventh day, she was notified that her worldly goods awaited her at the Dogana.

"Oh, indeed!" was the only comment she vouchsafed to make. Further, the Grande Vitesse, well satisfied with itself on the score of expedition, demanded the sum of one hundred and fifty francs as compensation. A *commissionnaire* accepted her keys, and went to claim her property. At evening-tide the trunks appeared, having a dusty appearance, as of "tramps" who had spent many nights on the road. This was not all: the custom-house demanded forty francs on an unmade dress, which she had purchased at

the Bon Marché in a moment of weakness —it was so cheap. Mrs. Sharpe paid in gloomy silence, and retired to the contemplation of her wardrobe, which was like a new acquaintance to her. At length she emerged, somewhat flushed and ruffled, and seated herself in the *salon*, Miss Nancy watching her with a sympathy she dared not express.

"From appearances I should judge that each custom-house officer had stood on his head in my large trunk in turn," she said, dryly. "Poor things! Perhaps they have no better amusement. When a human being called a man has sufficient curiosity to peep into a powder-box, and then insert the puff wrong side up, one pities him, because his sphere must be so very limited."

"They tell me that women would escape much of this surveillance had they not smuggled so many cigars for their male relatives," said Miss Nancy.

"Then they are very silly," retorted Mrs. Sharpe. "Cigars weigh more heavily every year against womankind. A cigar means a man's own ease, selfish enjoyment, spending his money on himself. How much did your baggage cost?"

"Thirty francs," said Miss Nancy: then added, slyly turning a leaf of the guide-book, "'Never leave your luggage in crossing a frontier.'"

"How can you be so disagreeable, Miss Hawse, when you never opposed my buying a through-ticket in the least? If this is a Grande Vitesse, it would be well to start a box twelve months in advance of the time needful by Petite Vitesse, acknowledged to be slower."

During this period of depression and gloom, Miss Nancy saw nothing of the Pierman family, and received no definite tidings from Howard Denby.

The Coliseum wore the most savage aspect possible for that noble ruin. Dark clouds lowered in heavy masses over the city, thunder rolled with peculiarly grand reverberations above the vast amphitheatre, as if the day of doom had come in reckoning of the crimes there perpetrated, lightning flashed with fitful vividness about the base, and sleet descended. A vender of small wares shivered in the opening; a cabman, nearly drowned in the sudden deluge, crouched on the box, scarcely less wretched than his smoking, disconsolate steed. Beyond, a fringe of furze was visible, and grass dripped; the green stagnant pool of water in the centre was ruffled into foam by the stinging blows of hail, the gusts of rough wind. Mrs. Sharpe and Miss Nancy stood beneath the arches, having descended from the cab, and were peering about them in silence. Need it be added, place and circumstance being taken into consideration, that their faces were very long indeed?

"I told you that those clouds meant rain," said Mrs. Sharpe.

Miss Nancy only quoted for reply, and somewhat dismally,

> "While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;
> When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall;
> And when Rome falls, the world."

"Yes, my dear; but I happen to have heard that before," said Mrs. Sharpe.

"The weather is unfavorable, certainly; yet it is a wonderful privilege to be able to stand here," said Miss Nancy.

"No doubt, if you do not catch your death of cold, or get struck by lightning," admitted the older lady.

"Try to picture the place and its uses," began Miss Nancy.

"The less said about its uses, the better, I should think," interpolated Mrs. Sharpe, without ceremony. "What with your brutal emperors and your tortured gladiators, it is a good thing the Coliseum has become a deserted ruin."

"Surely you feel reverence for the spot," said Miss Nancy, mildly.

"Not the least bit in the world," affirmed Mrs. Sharpe, elevating her nose in the air.

"But you must not be flippant," urged Miss Nancy, with increasing earnestness. "All structures are the shells of the builders, just as the coral polyps erect their reefs. Thus Vespasian laid the foundation on the site of Nero's reservoir, building as far as the third row of arches; and Titus completed the last two after his conquest of Jerusalem. Strange that the twelve thousand captive Jews should have been employed here, just as the race in bondage labored on the Egyptian Pyramids, unwilling hands constructing the great works of the world! This Flavian amphitheatre is the shell, not only of the ruler, but of the people as well; the very wealth of its resources when despoiled by robbers, after the Oriental monk Telemachus rushed into the arena to denounce the sports, and was stoned to death for his pains, revealed the inexhaustible splendor of the empire. What ravages it has suffered, and yet still maintains a semblance of its former self! The very iron cramps were wrenched out in the Middle Ages for other uses. Robert Guischard destroyed it to prevent its becoming a stronghold of the Romans. The wars of popedom stormed and battered the walls, and from the fourteenth century it became a quarry. Cardinal Farnese, having extorted a promise from his uncle, Paul III., to take as much stone as he could carry away in twelve hours, turned a horde of four thousand workmen loose for the purpose. The lovely old place, where so many martyrs shed their blood! Yes, and another pope, Sixtus V., having a practical turn of mind, tried to es-

tablish a woolen manufactory where Commodus had fought in the arena, dressed in a lion-skin, like Hercules, his hair powdered with gold-dust; and Clement XI. would fain make saltpetre on a spot which Titus dedicated with the utmost magnificence even for a people satiated with the spoils of war, the luxuries of conquered kingdoms, when cranes battled with dwarfs, gladiators strove together, and thousands of wild beasts were slaughtered. Not before the seventeenth century did civilization turn a fresh leaf, and begin to restore the scars made by demolition; for the first time appreciating the gift left to man by the centuries."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Sharpe, "you never have read about the mud and sleet, I suppose, as inducive to tranquil reflection on a vanished empire? Where are the vines, the ilex and aliterius, the shrubs tufting the walls and green inclosure? I see nothing but horrible stagnant water."

"The water was sometimes used in mimic naval combats as representing the contests between the Corcyreans and Corinthians, for example," said Miss Nancy, touching the masonry with her finger meditatively, and consulting "Baedeker." "Yonder is the podium reserved for the emperor, senate, and vestal virgins. The first stage with twenty-five steps was for knights and tribunes—"

"Suppose we go home," interrupted Mrs. Sharpe. "If any thing is tiresome, it is to have a companion keep one standing while poring over a guide-book."

"You have not heard a word about the martyrs yet," said Miss Nancy, with some spirit. "If any spot of earth is sacred, it is this amphitheatre, for the sufferings of the early Christians."

"We will leave the martyrs until another day, if you please, although I can readily fancy the snarling and howling of wild beasts in such weather;" and Mrs. Sharpe turned to the smoking horse, the crouching cabman, and even made a surreptitious donation to the shivering vender, with his little tray of mosaics.

"You take the most unfair advantage of me," she continued, when they were seated in the cab. "I am fairly overwhelmed, hedged in by your useful information; and you need not tell me that you know every thing quoted without reading up on the sly. For my own part, Mr. Hare haunts my waking and sleeping thoughts."

Miss Nancy sighed deeply, and murmured in a tone of dejection, quite foreign to her usual brisk manner,

"One seems to approach the ruins too closely, and the aspect of things is so different from the anticipation. Photographs give you the detached columns, or a temple, without the common every-day objects surrounding both."

The thunder rolled, hail descended, and the Coliseum gathered about its desolation an awful grandeur from these elements.

"If this were not Rome we should pity ourselves for passing through such vile streets," said Mrs. Sharpe, when the rattle of the cab-windows permitted her to be heard. "These alleys cease to be even thoroughfares, in a usual sense of the term, sometimes, and are, instead, the mere tubes of a vast sewer, noxious with damp vapors. Were I a chemist, I would invent for tourists about to set sail from America an *odeur de Rome*, to acclimate the nose, as it were. The base of the perfume — if that is the proper term—should be strong cheese, and other component parts rancid oil, fish, garlic, elderly vegetables, and an occasional whiff of sausage."

Miss Nancy smiled faintly.

"I wish that those children would write, or come," pursued Mr. Vidal's mother-in-law, with abrupt change of tone. "Who could imagine that they would have lingered in Nice three weeks longer than ourselves?"

"Who, indeed?" echoed Miss Nancy, absently.

"Really, Miss Hawse, I wish you were a trifle more lively as a companion. You have been absolutely dumpy ever since you arrived."

Thus the drive to the Coliseum terminated without enthusiasm.

On this gloom and darkness suddenly appeared light, soft, yet intensely brilliant, in the glow of sunshine, and all was changed.

"Father Tiber, to whom the Romans pray, looks better this morning; he has assumed a pale-blue mantle beneath his mane of yellow foam, and the change is not amiss, although he can never say much for himself," remarked Mrs. Sharpe, as the ladies sallied forth at nine o'clock in the morning. "These historical rivers in Europe move me only to derision. The Thames was a pretty, brimming brook at Windsor, and the Seine and Rhone charming rivulets; but I marvel what our streams will be—Mississippi, Hudson, Delaware, Connecticut, and Penobscot —when the events of centuries have rendered them famous. Bless me! Miss Hawse, you do look spry this morning for the first time. How hot the sunshine is!"

The cloud had vanished from Miss Nancy's countenance, even as the pall of sombre vapor, which had brooded over the city so long, had disappeared, melted into the depths of pure ether — a Roman sky. It was in the beauty shed by sun, with atmosphere dreamy and languid, as if with the promise of spring warmth that the past spoke to her, claimed her reverence, brought her penitent to the shrine of her pilgrimage at last. How sorry and ashamed she was to have been influenced by mere outward circumstance like a child!

To-day the old Barberini Palace basks in

the radiance of morning—the embodiment of Roman pride in Urban VIII., who carved the heraldic family bee in great places, and in one corner of the small gallery the beautiful face of Beatrice Cenci, gone abroad to the world in endless imitation, but never reproduced in the tender sadness, weariness, and dejection of farewell.

To-day the ceiling of St. Maria Maggiore has a more brilliant glow, like half-molten coins, in Spain's tribute of ceiling, gilded with the first South American gold, gift of pious Ferdinand and Isabella, which gleams far above the marble pavement. Did the gift shrive their souls of all the evil that gold represented, the bloodshed, cruelty, and greed its metallic beauty inspired in the breast of conquerors?

To-day the quaint and beautiful cloisters of San Giovanni Laterano, with arches supported on twisted columns, the gilding worn, will bloom with violets in the central greensward, like summer garnered between stone walls, while tendrils of vine cling to the rough masonry where the monk paces above, a moving form coming and going from light to shadow, himself an echo perhaps of the daily prayer which has ascended from the old basilica for fifteen centuries.

To-day the Piazza di San Pietro is dazzlingly white after the storm, in wide expanse of pavement, columns, the silver spray of fountains, and the obelisk brought from Heliopolis by Caligula, the fame of a certain Bordighera family established forever on its elevation here under Pope Sixtus V. by the disobedience of sailor Bresca, who exclaimed, "Acqua alle funi!" 'Tis an ungrateful world; one man has his head cut off for a rebellion which elevates another man to popularity.

Within the edifice is vast space, a delightful warmth of atmosphere, a giddy sense of awful height, and far in advance the golden ornaments of the *baldacchino;* St. Peter's lamps twinkling like a gigantic diadem. There is a drowsy hum of chanting audible in a side chapel, as if all Pope Urban's bees were swarming in the shadow of Bernini's "Christ;" a fat priest sleeps placidly in a confessional, with folded hands. A shrieking baby is being baptized at one altar, the candles falling full on the faces of priest and assistant, with the rich altar behind, standing out in relief against surrounding darkness, and the fringe of spectators gathered about the rails, wholly obscuring the little Christian, whose thin wail rises, as if in protest. Two old women stand together peering at the opening life, the candles also revealing their wrinkled faces beneath huddling shawls, with color and pattern lost generations since.

Now, indeed, Miss Nancy could feel that she was one of that numberless pilgrim band stretching back through the years to Theodosius; Belisarius; Cædwallo, King of the West Saxons, demanding baptism; Cendred, Prince of the Mercians, ready to sacrifice his long hair on St. Peter's shrine, and become a monk. A great company, forsooth. Ina of Wessex, who founded a church that Britons might worship, and, in dying, find a grave; Richard of England; Charlemagne; and, further back, Ethelwolf, bringing a child of six years, afterward Alfred the Great. All were gathered here, Miss Nancy, pilgrims like yourself in Constantine's basilica, which seems to have sunk through the floor of the modern temple, with Giotto's solemn heads peopling the darkness of crypt and nave.

At twelve o'clock, Mrs. Sharpe had climbed the steps of San Gregorio, a spot of peculiar interest to herself from the purchase of the old picture at Pisa. How tenderly had Gregory been retouched, the holes of his canvas mended, varnish applied to his fading robes, Mrs. Sharpe watching the process with satisfaction the while!

"He was a very good and great man, my dear," she said, pausing on the steps. "His mother, St. Silvia, lived yonder; and there is the little garden where he played as a child. Of all the beautiful legends attached to his memory, springing up like flowers above a grave ennobled by generous deeds, that of his having sold all his goods for the poor, alone retaining the silver basin, gift of his mother, and then giving that to the shipwrecked sailor who came to his cell, is the most touching. One likes to believe that the sailor returned to him in dreams, years later, promising the blessing of God. Ah, the creed of any man need not be questioned too closely, if his own nature prompts him to feed the poor and befriend the helpless."

"St. Augustine knelt on the grass below, before departing as first missionary to England," said Miss Nancy.

The deep-blue sky, so brilliant and limitless, spread above them; opposite rose the Palace of the Cæsars in terraces and tower fragments, half concealed in luxuriant grass and shrubbery; beyond the Coliseum, mellowed in hue by the radiant purity of the atmosphere, was traversed by shafts of golden light between arches and open casements; Caracalla's Baths towered in huge masses of masonry, vivid orange-red against the heavens; almond-trees were blossoming beside San Gregorio in the fragrant fallen snow of bloom; an orange-tree laden with fruit hung over the convent wall; the breeze stirred with the promise of budding spring. Within the cloistered arches reposes the dust of Sir Edward Carne, who came to Rome concerning that perplexing business of King Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon; farther on is the altar commemorating Gregory's rescue of Trajan's soul from purgatory,

and the low door leading to the monastic cell where slept a man in peaceful retirement for so many years, destined to rule on the overthrown ruins of Roman power.

"I don't care about the miracles, of course," said Mrs. Sharpe, peering into chapel and garden; "but I do like his praying for the heathen Trajan, because of the good he had done in his day; and I like, better still, the silver basin given to the destitute sailor."

The two friends had reached San Gregorio by that route which will inspire more solemnity and reverence in the human heart than any other—the Cœlian. Here are found few traces of palace or temple, save a hint of that raised by Agrippina, to the memory of Claudius after she had feasted him on poisoned mushrooms; but in the lonely lanes are ancient churches, separated by gardens and vineyards, each with a story, often fanciful fable, surrounding marble altars, inscriptions, and tombs of saints, yet historically belonging to the whole Christian world. SS. Giovanni e Paolo, with tall *campanile*, arcaded apse inlaid with colored tiles, and garden revealing the Coliseum through ancient cypresses; Arch of Dolabella, with its hermitage above, whither was brought that holy man, San Giovanni di Matha, from Tunis, without inconvenience of sails, his crucifix serving both as rudder and compass; Piazza di Navicella, with Nero's aqueduct gaining rich coloring from the sunshine, and almond-trees blossoming in gaps of the ruins; and San Stefano Rotondo, approached by the little cloister; and Michael Angelo's well, chill, deserted, lofty, with only that terrible record of Christian martyrdom encircling the walls; suffering, agony, heroism past belief, there delineated in strong men and delicate maidens on the fading frescoes.

"They died for us, and they belong to us just as much as to the Romish Church," Miss Nancy had said. "I wonder how many Christians in this nineteenth century, in which religion is fashionable, would for their Redeemer's name have hot lead poured down their throats, like Erasmus; be roasted in a brazen bull, like Eustachio and his family; be torn in pieces by iron forks, like Margaret, or devoured by lions in the arena, like Perpetua and Felicitas. Now we can appreciate the Coliseum, Mrs. Sharpe."

"Yes; and how much better was the Inquisition, perhaps established by the descendants of the very people who thronged to see the early Christians killed?" inquired that lady, promptly.

Pausing on the steps of San Gregorio once more, Miss Nancy said,

"We had better leave St. Paul until another time."

"No; this is a day in a thousand," replied Mrs. Sharpe; and, as usual, she had her own way.

How glad was Miss Nancy afterward that such was the case!

San Gregorio lay on the brink of that brown waste of Campagna which encroaches so insidiously on life year by year. Above the fences of thatch, tied with ribbon-like reeds, the shrubbery showed green wands tipped with unfolding leaves, while the silvery blossoms of the fruit-trees became more abundant; and here were the old Roman walls, each angle and gate-way forming a fresh picture, all tufted with moss and yellow-berried ivy. Gray oxen, dappled and mild-eyed, tinkled their metal bells as they dragged loads of straw toward the city; the peasants guiding them had the sallow aspect of the fever-smitten, and beneath the hot sunshine of early spring the whole country exhaled odors horribly suggestive of the dead.

"In that farm-yard is the spring, the fountain of Egeria, where Numa Pompilius is described as having had mysterious meetings with the nymph. Shall we go in?" inquired Miss Nancy.

"I don't care about your nymphs; and I do not believe in them either," said Mrs. Sharpe. "This is the road once trodden by St. Paul."

"Ah, and here St. Francesca, disguised in a woolen garment, brought fagots from her own vineyard for the city poor on her head; and Plautilla gave her veil to St. Paul," said Miss Nancy. "If we paused, we could find some object of interest at every yard connected with the wonderful journey of the great apostle toward martyrdom."

The Porta San Paolo was passed, with the pyramid on the right hand, landmark of all the Protestant world from the vicinity of the cemetery, relic of the Roman tribune, so ancient that Paul's own gaze must have rested on it as he trod the way peopled with the throngs from Ostia—sailors, merchants, astrologers, and soldiers.

"One likes to believe that Peter was also here, and that the two parted at the spot where stands the little chapel," mused Miss Nancy. "And Peter said to Paul, 'Go in peace, preacher of good tidings, and guide of the salvation of the just.'"

The sunshine was also solemn here. As in the silence of the heights of Cimiez at Nice, there was quiet in the beauty of the day. Mrs. Sharpe was mute. San Paolo fuori le Mura, with pavements like a sea of glistening ice, and an atmosphere deadly cold after the warmth outside, when the leather curtain of separation once more drops behind the visitor. Vistas of granite pillars uphold the golden ceiling; altars of malachite, columns of Oriental alabaster from Egypt, statues of Paul and Peter, and those windows far above where saints and apos-

tles shed a glow on the interior from crimson mantles and robes of royal purple and blue. Could modern magnificence achieve more? In this very splendor, so polished and cold, there is something hard and unsympathetic. No tender memories has the structure to revive, save its site on the edge of the deserted Campagna, as had the old basilica rising in the vineyard of the Roman matron Lucina, who gave burial to St. Paul, from small oratory enlarged to temple, and enriched by every succeeding century in treasures of art, endeared by venerable association. In the vast place one beholds Pius IX. and work of the present day; contributions levied on all countries to rebuild the shrine destroyed by fire in 1823; the wealth of princes heaped together, not for the glory of the great apostle to the Gentiles, but of the Church.

Christ appears in the tribune mosaics with the four evangelists, as if rising against the golden background of sunset clouds, in the Giotto school, and beneath the arch is the "confession" where St. Paul is believed to repose. Light comes through the windows rich with the dyes of gorgeous raiment, but the pavement is a wide sea of glistening ice, and the breath clings around the lips as if about to congeal.

Mrs. Sharpe and Miss Nancy hastened out after an inspection of the church, and confronted Mrs. Pierman. The lady had just descended from a carriage, and was giving alms to a woman whose face and clothing had one pervading hue of yellowish brown; she was followed by Tommy, and the French *bonne*, Marie. Mrs. Pierman's aspect was somewhat pale, weary, and abstracted. She gazed at Miss Nancy with a slow scrutiny before extending her hand in recognition. It is possible to address a person as if thinking of something else. Mrs. Pierman thus addressed Miss Nancy:

"How are you, Nancy? So, you have traveled as far as Rome. No doubt, you are enthusiastic about the Eternal City; one always is on a first visit. We find it rather dull: there are so few Americans this year. Come and see us when you have time. We stop at the Hotel San Vitale always."

Tommy stared at Miss Nancy without recognition. The meeting in the Albert Hall, London, had been quite crowded out of his little mind by more recent events. The leather curtain fell after Mrs. Pierman's retreating form, and the other ladies drove back to the city.

"The English protected San Paolo before the Reformation, just as the French do St. John Lateran, and the Spanish Santa Maria Maggiore," said Mrs. Sharpe.

Miss Nancy was hurt and perplexed by Margaret Pierman's greeting, by Tommy's blank lack of recognition.

"This has been a day in a thousand," exclaimed Mrs. Sharpe, gayly, again, as they reached their own door.

A letter awaited her, such a long, closely written letter, with blots and erasures not noticed in the haste and excitement of penning by the writer.

"Well, Emmy has spoken at last," and Mrs. Sharpe smoothed out the sheets for a leisurely perusal.

Watching her from time to time with a dread she could not define, Miss Nancy saw her face change to perplexity, even alarm.

"See what you can make of all this," she said, presently, giving the letter to her companion.

Miss Nancy could make it out plainly enough. The letter was dated Leghorn, and Emma Vidal, in perturbation and distress of mind, acquainted her mother with facts no longer to be concealed. Richard had got in with bad company at Nice—persons in whom he was deceived—and had ruined himself, so far as available funds, and his paper given for more, could ruin him, at the game of *baccarat*. There was a man calling himself a duke, when he was only a horrible gambler in league with other gamblers, Emma Vidal wrote, who had made himself very useful to poor Richard, just to cheat him. Her husband had not played much; indeed, he had scarcely done more than learn the game, which was so rapid and clever as to the skill required that he lost heavily before he knew it; then played at other times to make it up. And, indeed, it was not Monaco, because she knew; but only the clubs in the afternoon. Emma wished—oh! how she wished—that they had left the dear, delightful place before, and come to Rome. Richard was very desperate and queer; had gone straight to Leghorn, and engaged passage on the next Anchor steamship touching at that port. If mother would let them go home, and live in the old place for a year, they would be very grateful, and Richard meant to begin all over again.

"Bless my soul!" said Mrs. Sharpe; "and they expect me to join them in sailing for America in less than a week. What *baccarat* may be is quite beyond me, but if any one had told me that Richard Vidal would be such a fool as to waste money on a game of cards, I would not have believed it. The idea! Why, I am just beginning to enjoy Europe, and I don't wish to go back yet. A nice business, truly! I shall have to take my son-in-law home in less than nine months after marriage, and support him."

Mrs. Sharpe departed, once more cheered on her way by Messrs. Cook & Son; and Miss Nancy was left with a sense of loneliness such as she had never yet felt. Was her life only an aimless drifting across the track of others, each with a purpose, a home port to gain?

CHAPTER XXI.

BLANCHE PIERMAN.

At four o'clock on a bright afternoon, Blanche Pierman sat opposite her parents in a carriage approaching the Pincio. All the world of fashion was abroad. A little flower-girl, with dusty brown hair knotted behind and arch face, held up her basket of violets temptingly. The models grouped themselves artistically about the Trinità steps, in leggings, sheep-skin, and steeple-crowned hats, with the aspect described by Charles Dickens — a group of sadly dirty vagabonds, without those accessories of sun-lit wall and fountain around which they lounge so gracefully.

The Piermans were rather a silent family party. Something of the mother's listless abstraction was reflected in the daughter's sweet, fair face, producing the oddest resemblance. Dr. Pierman's face also was far from being a smooth and happy one, perhaps in the very protest of a man devoted to his profession chafing under prolonged inaction in travel. Thus they came to the border of trees, the throngs of pedestrians, the line of vehicles winding up the hill to this most beautiful drive in the world, not for its bass-reliefs or rostral columns, not for the statues, time-stained and blackened, gazing down from the balustrades, not for the memory of Lucullus, or the miserable death of Messalina, but because Rome is spread out at the feet—palaces, churches, ruins, with the river wending along to the Campagna, St. Angelo on its bank, and the sun sinking, a fiery red ball, into depths of opalescent cloud with tremulous pink rays shed across the domes and spires. Here were the small forest of lace parasols gathered about the band, the rows of men surveying the passing carriages with unflagging interest in each occupant, and the groups of officers, still draped in their becoming blue cloaks, with gleam of silver sword-scabbard as they walked.

"How superb they are!" said Blanche, blithely. "I should like an Italian prince to fall in love with me, papa, if he were a soldier, and would always wear his epaulets."

Mrs. Pierman smiled faintly.

"Perhaps the prince would not fall in love with you. Certainly he would claim fortune as a dowry if he did."

Rockwell Cocks had not demanded a dowry with Blanche; and over this grievance of his disaffection Mrs. Pierman could never cease to brood.

"How cruel to weigh me against metallic charms!" said Blanche, with a pout; and then she glanced at the calm, handsome officers through her eyelashes pensively, wondering what they were like, and how they went a-wooing.

"Do all men of the present day value one only for the money one brings?"

This was questioned by rosy lips ready to arch into laughter, if the occasion warranted, and long dark eyes glancing at the Pincian dandies, searching for something beyond among the soft clouds of sunset.

"Most men do," said Mrs. Pierman, with acid emphasis.

"What nonsense you are teaching Pussy," interposed Dr. Pierman. "There are men still in the world, my darling, who value the worth, the beauty of true womanhood, beyond worldly advantages."

Mrs. Pierman looked at him with a peculiar expression. She could not help it; she was so much out with her present existence that the temptation to make others uncomfortable, even unhappy, was irresistible.

"At least I had a neat little fortune, John."

Dr. Pierman winced and reddened, and Blanche looked on with doubt and disapprobation.

"It is very unkind to fling that in the poor dear's face," she said, promptly, leaning over to pat her father's arm. "If you had a fortune, mamma, it made no difference in his love for you, I am sure. Was she pretty, sir, and did she look at all like me?"

Both parents smiled upon her without response, the charming little maiden in black velvet, with pink feathers in her hat; but afterward the mother sighed deeply, and her companions knew perfectly well the meaning of that dolorous respiration, the daughter most acutely of both. Somehow, if Blanche ever did happen to be gay in this sombre old city of Rome, that sigh of her mother's was heard, checking merriment. Mrs. Pierman took deeply to heart the frustration of her cherished hopes for settling her daughter in life, and all the more terrible was the blow that her husband — almost for the first time in their married existence—had exerted his positive authority in breaking off the match with Rockwell Cocks.

Dr. Pierman had not been so much a careless man in governing his household, as a preoccupied one; and the years had delivered the rule of power more and more into Mrs. Pierman's hands, and she gloried in it. The wife believed that she had been placed in the world to manage people cleverly, to influence adroitly results without appearing to do so, and her own success had strengthened the belief. Fate had thus placed the Cocks family in her path, and, behold! Blanche had become affianced to the young man, thanks to her own skill, when Dr. Pierman interfered, broke off the match, and sternly forbade her to mediate. Mrs. Pierman was stupefied by her misfortune, which came too swiftly for preparation or even speculation. No sovereign was ever more astonished by the revolt of a conquered and

peaceful province. Did she not know what was best for Blanche? Had she not planned the whole affair from the moment of introduction on the steamer's deck? She had ruled her husband for years by dint of persistent argument, when her voice usually assumed a higher key, metallic and penetrating, and he had been careless, indifferent, in the absorption of his profession, allowing her to have her own way. There were few quarrels; Mrs. Pierman controlled, and they lived in separate worlds. She detested his drugs, and grew pale over his surgical instruments.

And now, in the most important step ever taken, he flatly opposed her; dismissed Rockwell Cocks without even consulting her. This was hard to bear. She might reason, weep, storm, cajole — the man and father remained immovable. Blanche, his only daughter, was concerned in his decision, and he realized the full necessity for firmness. His attention having been called to the irregular course of Rockwell Cocks's life, he had watched him accordingly, and found ample proof that he was not a suitable husband for his child. Rockwell had behaved very well in his interview with Dr. Pierman, had confessed his many short-comings with a proper humility, and accepted his dismissal without appeal. This interview, which left Dr. Pierman rather puzzled as to the young man's actual feelings, would have galled Howard Denby, proud and reticent, to the core. Rockwell Cocks instead lighted a cigar, took Blanche's ivory picture from the mosaic frame, studied it a while in silence, then ran off to his mother, kissing her with unusual heartiness, and proposing a trip to Egypt.

"That is over; and I don't think I am a marrying man, *madre mia*," he said, lightly.

But the kiss did not disperse a cloud of anxiety on Mrs. Cocks's face. Her dearest boy had been set aside by Dr. Pierman with unnecessary severity and curtness; and, whatever his peccadillos, he was no worse than other youths. Her *amour propre* as a Bagatelle was deeply wounded by the proceeding. I fear that Mrs. Cocks's letters home represented the broken engagement as a mutual conclusion, Blanche being a sweet girl, but not quite the wife for Rockwell, and the two had parted excellent friends. Afterward the lady removed to another hotel, while making arrangements for Egypt, and was not at home when Mrs. Pierman, still dazed by events, called. The Cocks acquaintance was ended on worse terms than as though it had never begun.

To this poignant sense of mortification and humiliation Mrs. Pierman succumbed. Her husband was puzzled by her despair, and took Blanche about with him in full faith that fresh air would disperse melancholy, at least for a young nature. Mrs. Pierman's failure had so many phases that she could each day find a new grievance in it. To have been so near marrying Rockwell Cocks, and have failed! She was a self-tormentor, never assured of her ground, like a born Bagatelle, keenly alive to glances, gestures, equivocal words; and to such a nature, calm though the exterior may be, ridicule is insupportable. She was already ridiculous at home, where every one would be gossiping over this broken match in time: and who had flaunted Blanche's conquest so widely as her own mother? In her heart she had always meant that no loop-hole of escape should be allowed the volatile butterfly which had been caught in Blanche's little gossamer net. This was a hard, mean truth, scarcely confessed to herself, and never to others; and while she had worked for this end patiently and long, her husband had destroyed every thing in one day.

"Those Piermans who tried to get on in the world, you know. Caught Rockwell Cocks for the girl abroad, or thought they had, only he slipped through somehow. Pretty? Yes, rather—nothing remarkable."

This would be her world's verdict. She had measured out the same herself, many a time, over a luncheon party or kettle-drum.

And Blanche? Her mother absorbed so much attention at this time, as the being most afflicted, that she had little leisure for herself, and this may have been a blessing.

"Dear mamma, I am sorry to have disgraced you, as I seem to have done," said the girl one day, sitting down beside the sofa, where lay Mrs. Pierman, with a handkerchief over her eyes saturated in eau-de-Cologne.

"I am not thinking of myself, but of you, darling," the mother had answered. "It is such a terrible drawback to have been once engaged, and so publicly too. Men do not like it in marrying at all. I am sure Rockwell Cocks has ruined your chances, and I believe your father was very harsh with him."

"I am sure papa tried to do what was right," said Blanche, in a low tone, studying the carpet.

"Young men must be wild sometimes, and you might have saved him by your influence," said Mrs. Pierman, removing the handkerchief to gaze at her daughter.

"Do not say such a thing," cried Blanche, a little wildly. "Did he ever ask it? He cared nothing for me."

Then she burst into a tempest of tears, and ran off to her own room, Mrs. Pierman marveling a little at her temper. Parents are the gardeners that dwarf and cramp the plants beneath their care into unnatural growths sometimes; the lapidaries that often cut their priceless gems to yield such oblique rays, instead of the full splendor

possible. Blanche felt very rebellious and tragic when she ran off in tears.

"Mother despises me because I am unsuccessful; I suppose every one will," she panted, with hot cheeks and trembling hands.

She would escape from it all if she could. This question of marriage! Blanche set her small teeth in her full under-lip, and frowned. Surely she was very young, only eighteen; and one need not be so harassed at every turn by that matter yet.

The little goad of Mrs. Pierman's irritable, restless ambition was already applied to her daughter's dimpled shoulders as it had been to her husband's all these years. Blanche must marry as soon as she left school, and marry well. The girl shuddered a little when glancing back at Rockwell Cocks. He had chilled the tender pity with which she would have received him in the effort to make him better — most seductive hope of feminine breast — and forgiven his faults; and he had wounded her delicacy, perhaps piqued her, by never soliciting such sweet forgiveness. No word, no line, no beseeching of a farewell interview, which, with Mrs. Pierman's aid, would have too surely bridged the chasm in reconciliation; and thus the ashes fell into the urn of buried hope. Blanche did not lie on the moonlit floor in rigid unconsciousness, did not drift into illness and gloom: modern young women seldom do, although the heroism of veiling their dead may have none the less a sublime self-abnegation in the wearisome resumption of painful routine.

She cried over the heap of charming trinkets which were to be sent back, and the ring wrenched from her finger. It was all so miserable, and a mistake which need never have been made, had they known better from the first. Each separate gift in the glittering pile gave her a little stab of pain, a sense of mortification. Rockwell was very generous. Then she wrote a pitiful little note to him, dictated by her own conviction of the error, and her father had the unparalleled cruelty to put it into the fire, sending the trinkets with his own card instead. After that Mrs. Pierman had arisen from her couch, and washed her hands of the future thus:

"Henceforth you can manage your daughter's affairs, John, for I will not attempt it."

"I will endeavor to look out for her," he had answered, gravely, not thinking of his wife's anger half so much as his own negligence.

If Blanche was grown up actually, it behooved him to cherish and protect her. He scanned succeeding gentlemen who approached her so severely that he frightened away a German baron and a French count. Mrs. Pierman then smiled at masculine obtuseness: the foreigners had no intentions, and simply considered John a boor.

The sun disappeared, the music ceased, and the carriages turned homeward, leaving the Pincio deserted, with its shrubbery and gardens in the twilight, as when the ghost of Nero was said to wander here.

"I wonder what has become of Miss Nancy Hawse?" Blanche remarked, meditatively. "She intended visiting Rome."

To youth's wayward fancy did the schoolmarm form a link in that chain stretching back to the quaint chapel of the Hôtel Cluny, with saints faintly outlined on the window-panes, and an eager voice—oh! so sweet and thrilling as it receded into the past—"I love you, Blanche."

Mrs. Pierman shivered, and gathered her shawl closer about her, without reply. She was a person who believed that one may keep many secrets without necessarily uttering falsehoods. Hence she need not mention having met Miss Nancy at St. Paul's without the walls last week, since she had not called. Thus the Piermans drove back to the hotel as silent as they had started.

At the same hour when the Piermans drove out, the object of Blanche's speculations, Miss Nancy, was standing in the Church of St. Cecilia. She had come alone, and no other occupant disputed possession with her of the deserted edifice. In this very silence was a repose befitting the sleep of Cecilia beneath the altar. The first glimpse of her marble draperies, her delicate hands, and averted head gave Miss Nancy a thrill of sympathy and pity. Beautiful Cecilia, noble Roman lady, envied for the wealth that fed the poor, a lamb among the wolves, converting all who came within sound of the voice which angels stooped to hear — was this, indeed, the shrine chosen for your hallowed dust? Miss Nancy had seen the picturesque *campanile*, the ancient marble pillars gathered from pagan ruins without; the tomb of Adam of Hertford and Cardinal Fortiguerra flanking the entrance; but these were nothing to her while hastening to the altar to admire the graceful form, wrought by Stefano Maderno after he ran with all the town to see her uncorrupted body as taken from the Catacombs, wrapped in gold tissue befitting her rank. There was something absolutely vivid to the living woman in the presence of the dead one. This was once her house, and she expired A.D. 280. The altar canopy, with its statuettes of Cecilia and the husband and brother she had converted, Valerian and Tiburtius; the mosaics of the tribune; Christ robed in gold, with mystic phenix and palm-tree emblems; the fresco representing Pascal I. asleep, when the saint appeared to him in gorgeous raiment revealing the spot of her burial in the Catacombs; the yearly praise of the papal choir in this plain, simple church to one who was inspired to sing by heavenly visitors; all were a later

growth of church ceremonial, springing from that first impulse, a noble life, and Miss Nancy scarcely heeded them. The conviction came to her with delight and exultation that she was the first stranger who had ever intruded here; alone of all the throngs of visitors had she found this shrine.

Then a peculiar nasal chant became audible. She glanced around, and a little rosy brother, his priestly garments shabby and rusty, stood beside her smilingly, awaiting her inspection of the bath. Miss Nancy's castle of supremacy in having discovered lovely St. Cecilia was shattered by the first glance of his eye; he jingled his keys, and represented to her the latest of no mortal knows how many visitors. The chanting grew louder, but no train of acolytes or monks appeared.

The brother pointed to the inclosed gallery above, still smiling:

"Les religieuses."

Miss Nancy fancied she had discerned a nun's black drapery through the lattice, and gazed with absorbed interest at the curtained door-way with its grating, beyond which the Benedictine sisterhood do not emerge, remaining invisible to all. The brother turned the slide through which he had just passed their daily portion of charcoal, assuring the lady that he had never seen them. Here was the mystery fraught with terror and romance so many centuries; the grated door, the convent seclusion, the chanting voices in the latticed gallery, with the shadow of a black robe, the flutter of a veil faintly discernible in a ghostly band set apart from the world.

Then the brother lighted his taper, and Miss Nancy entered those low stone chambers, the bath attached to all Roman houses of rank, where the Lady Cecilia had been imprisoned so many ages ago, amidst the fiery vapor which would not suffocate because a cooling shower had tempered the heat, thus preserving her alive. The little taper flickered up and down massive masonry, mosaic pavement from the Catacombs, revealing the furnace doors far beneath where cruel hands had heaped the fuel, pipes, and apertures for the steam. Miss Nancy looked above for some possible opening where a faithful servant might have poured a stream of cold water upon the captive of the *suditorium*, and, as the guide could not understand her, his feelings were not hurt by her incredulity.

"It was this belief in latter miracles which led Savonarola to the stake," murmured Miss Nancy.

"Sì," assented the brother, smilingly. "Questo è fresco di Santa Cecilia e Valeriano."

The pavement was dull, moist, broken in places as if with cracks and fissures of extreme age; the walls of the church were cold, barren, naked; yonder was the curtained door of the chanting sisterhood, and beneath the altar, like a broken lily, Cecilia.

At the hour when the Piermans drove back from the Pincio to their hotel, Miss Nancy also returned homeward, and in solemn mood. The peace of twilight brooding over that quaint old church, fashioned from her own house, and restored to St. Cecilia by posterity, had also permeated Miss Nancy's breast. In living she had said:

"I have an angel which thus loveth me,
That with great love, whether I wake or sleep,
Is ready aye my body for to keep."

In dying after the lictor's cruel blows, she had thanked God for considering her worthy to share the glory of his heroes. Who are the Cecilias of to-day, ready to sacrifice wealth, position, the respect of society, nay, to defy rulers with the tortures of the suffocating bath, the wheel, the axe, at their command?

Absorbed in meditation on these things, the old faint sense of loneliness and uselessness crept over Miss Nancy. Was Martha Dunne, crabbed, queer, and plain in her blue goggles, a St. Cecilia wrapped in golden tissue, pictured with gem-bordered robe, lying in marble purity of delicate, drooping limbs beneath a richly decorated altar? Not in this world, Martha Dunne, the saint's aureole on church wall and ceiling, the martyr's palm of immortality! Through what vale of aimless wanderings should she, Nancy Hawse, ever become one, in smallest phase of imitation? She went to the window, and looked out on the silent street, with the piazza all in shadow. Fain would she have wandered forth had she dared, and even in fancy she trod again the Ostian Way, beneath the arch where had passed the man who was the reality, while those of the present are the shadows—Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BLUE BALCONY.

"We seem to be very early, and I am sure a carriage is ever so much more agreeable," said Mrs. Pierman, peevishly.

"Then you get all the old bouquets full of gravel in your eyes, mamma, while up here you are safe," protested Blanche.

"Have your own way," returned Mrs. Pierman, in a tone of resignation.

"Then my own way is to have quantities of pretty things thrown at me," said Blanche, gayly.

Her mother looked at her gloomily, an expression which was becoming habitual. Mrs. Pierman either was not, or feigned not to be, interested in the scene about her. She had done her best, and been foiled by her

own family. Blanche had made herself very bright and pretty for the occasion; not, indeed, in pink-cambric dominoes, such as the Italian ladies wear, but with a fleecy white jacket and silver ornaments, likely to attract the homage of the passing Carnival throng.

The Corso was crowded, that narrow thoroughfare so celebrated, which must be seen for due appreciation, when all those balconies which seem to have adhered to the houses in a reckless fashion, each without reference to its neighbor, are decked with holiday colors, and above the sky is blue, extending like a narrow ceiling over the tall houses. Blanche's quick eye ranged up and down the street; venders of bouquets held them up to her notice on poles; and the rainbow pennants of those winged missiles that shoot through the air with comet-tail of colored tissue-paper were made to flutter appealingly beneath her gaze. Farther on was the Piazza del Popolo, in the full tide of golden afternoon sunshine; on one side the garden wall topped by budding trees, the brass helmets of the band glittering, and in the centre the obelisk guarded by its solemn lions—a monument old in Moses' childhood, decked with flags by the Carnival of the good year 1876.

Groups of maskers danced on the pavement to the music or the rattle of their own tambourines; sailors, in blue and white; ballet-girls; and the black dress, relieved by white-muslin apron, mantle, and mob-cap—most frequent garb of the maidens—worn in honor of Genoese Princess Marguerite. Opposite Blanche was a long crimson balcony, and next two little green ones with the odd aspect of steamboat berths; again, the fancy of the owners had converted these ornamental excrescences into the semblance of bonbon-boxes, fringed borders, garlands of artificial flowers festooned across the drapery, and gilt caskets swinging, like gigantic tassels, from corners. Only tinsel, cambric, muslin roses in cheapest form of imitation, yet wonderfully pretty in effect beneath that clear sky, and above the surging crowd constantly passing from gate-way of shadow to the wide, brilliant piazza.

Next to Blanche was an unoccupied balcony, separated by a yard of space, and it was blue. The balcony had a certain aspect of superiority above its fellows which Mrs. Pierman was quick to resent; the blue drapery was carried up into a coronet-shaped canopy, so as to reveal the occupants well; the lower portions were held in knots of ribbon with little bouquets of yellow roses, and two amber satin arm-chairs were conspicuously placed within.

"That is much better than ours, John. You should choose a place with some reference to becomingness. How we must look against this dingy red, just like bed-curtains!" said Mrs. Pierman.

"The blue balcony must have cost far more, my dear," said Dr. Pierman, mildly.

Blanche, with imagination in full play, began to people the pretty window with shapes.

"The prince will come there who is to fall in love with me," she thought; "and by the time he arrives I shall have received a bouquet-stem in my right eye, in order to bind it up in a pocket-handkerchief. Failing the prince, somebody in the crowd will be smitten with my charms, and rush upstairs, insisting on paying five hundred francs, at least, for the blue balcony in order to flirt with me."

Then the girl drew back suddenly, flushing with shame or anger. She had seen a man in the street who resembled Rockwell Cocks: the very remembrance conveyed a sting.

Miss Nancy had climbed the Capitol steps with Howard Denby that day.

Yes, the young man had arrived in Rome at last, and Miss Nancy regarded him with a subdued satisfaction, not seeing her way clearly, as yet, to bringing about a meeting with Blanche Pierman, and willing to await events. Was he changed? Scarcely different in outward aspect, but with a possible addition of courage gained from the prospect of success; for he was given hope in England that much work, vigilance, and patience would be crowned with ultimate reward.

"The Capitol is worthy of a daily visit, especially to a young man, from its wonderful historical associations; but there! I promise not to preach, as my friend Mrs. Sharpe always accused me of doing," said Miss Nancy.

Accordingly she suffered Howard Denby to take his own course, to see the meek little wolf blinking in his den; to gaze up at the gigantic twin brothers, curbing their steeds on either hand, who preceded the Roman army after the battle of Lake Regillus, watered their horses at the Aqua Argentina, and passed away from sight of man, to come upon Marcus Aurelius in the square above unaided; all in the sunshine of the perfect day, with the steps of Ara Cœli on the left marking a site descended by Julius Cæsar on his knees after victory. Howard Denby must receive the image as best he could on that varying retina of sensitive impression—a man's brain; the flight of Rienzi, and murder at the base; the great bell of Viterbo, mute until it announces the death of Pio Nono; the quacking of the sacred geese — school-boy lesson; and gorgeous Tarpeia sitting, enchanted, in the depths of the hill, clothed in the gold and jewels which were her shame.

Miss Nancy, on her first visit to the Capitol, had paused just within the entrance of the Museo, rooted to the spot: the old figure of a river god opposite, moss-stained, and with

water gushing from a spout below with musical ripple, had certainly winked at her drolly. Now, a statue had never so winked at her before, and she was forced to smile in response to the humor of his massive countenance. There he lounged on one elbow, and seemed to greet her with,

"How are you? It is so uncommonly dull up here among the classical statues, that one does not know what is going on in the world. Any news?"

The river god was Marforio, banished to this safe seclusion for his naughty witticisms exchanged with his gossip Pasquin of the Palazzo Braschi, to the delight of the towns-people; and Marforio had an undoubted right to wink at Miss Nancy if she came to visit him in doleful retirement.

Howard Denby also laughed as he first beheld the statue.

"What a funny old fellow!" he exclaimed. "He seems almost to wink at me."

Miss Nancy sighed. She was only traveling on the beaten track traversed by thousands before her, instead of making discoveries. The colossal Hadrian stirred whatever element of boyish enthusiasm existed beneath Howard Denby's calm exterior. Perhaps for the first time since he had attained that age of fifteen, and stood in the wintry street before the grocery shop, he stepped beyond the limits of self in the corridors of the Capitol. Like Mrs. Pierman, he was never sure of himself, although for different reasons, and this uncertainty produced a brooding, morbid self-examination, resulting in discontent. The young man, whose later years had been spent in a tropical wilderness, did not pause to analyze his emotions as Miss Nancy did, when he saw the familiar stooping form of the Gladiator, most pathetic in its heroism. The Faun smiled down upon him with enchanting grace and good humor, the most expressive nonchalance in his mien; Antinous turned the graver beauty of his perfect face; and Miss Nancy strolled on, for Howard Denby had no attention to bestow upon other object than this dying Gaul.

Something appealed to his whole nature in the terrible agony, the last struggle endured without a groan, until dissolution came as release. Could he die like that? Instantly there flashed upon him the conviction that if he had seen this time-worn form before, so instinct with life, so mournful and stern, he should have been a different being. The thorn-pricks of modern life could not be compared with the taming in captivity under hated conquerors, the end in an arena still more fearful, slain, or slaying a possible friend, even if a fellow-slave. The day was changed, yet here was a barbarian capable of teaching how to die nobly, although sunk to the most ignoble phase of servitude.

Miss Nancy admired the Venus, her exquisite perfection enshrined in her separate niche, like a cameo on sardonyx ground, and then searched for favorites in the Hall of the Emperors, a pursuit of which she was never weary. Sometimes she fell insensibly into Mrs. Sharpe's vein of derision of these ancient busts, where the most delicate features, the most noble physiognomy, were placed beside the low, cruel, bestial type.

"Talk about the follies of the age," reflected our school-marm, her gaze turning from the haughty Livia and the seated Agrippina to Julia and Messalina, with their frizzled locks and elaborate coiffures, "the Roman ladies could scarcely learn much from the Paris of to-day, unless it might be in that inestimable boon of tight lacing. Poppæa Sabina, killed by the kick of your noble lord, with your infantile grace and your celebrated toilet, could this poor nineteenth century offer you any thing new in hair-dyes, cosmetics, perfumes? No doubt you lived in the palace glittering with gold and jewels, erected by that restless madman, your husband; slept on beds of down, reposed on couches inlaid with tortoise-shell, went forth in gilded litters, bathed in marble baths, and drank from crystal cups; but, all the same, you were kicked to death by the monster Nero."

Howard Denby stood before the Gladiator, with Antinous and the Faun looking down on him. The image was becoming stamped on his brain; he did not wish to receive other objects in the very intensity of the first impression. Miss Nancy touched his arm:

"We must go to lunch now, my dear."

Howard smiled almost scornfully.

"I am not hungry—here," he answered.

"Of course, and that is the way illness comes; so you will oblige me by consuming a certain quantity of noonday beefsteak," replied Miss Nancy.

Mrs. Pierman yawned drearily in her corner of the balcony. Blanche, flushed with animation, was tossing and receiving bouquets; bonbons rattled against the balustrade like hail.

"Do you feel unwell, Margaret?" inquired Dr. Pierman, with solicitude.

"Oh no. My head aches more than usual with this hot sun."

"People have to be careful here in Rome. That is all," he added, catching a bunch of violets for his daughter.

Mrs. Pierman raised her eyebrows slightly.

"New-comers, you mean, John. Old *habitués* know how to take care of themselves, usually, and do not seek the Coliseum by moonlight after a ball, or sit on a garden wall sketching in the twilight."

The blue balcony had remained unoccupied hitherto. Now a young girl stepped out, hugging a snowy Spitz dog in her arms.

Blanche edged up to the railing, and patted the dog across the space intervening. The people were late coming, she said, after praising the canine countenance. Yes, it was always a foreign lady, an *Inglese*, who had the blue balcony for the Carnival, the young girl had replied. Blanche ceased to be interested. No doubt a fat milady would come, with a footman and maid, and be stupid altogether.

Just as she had arrived at this decision, and was in the act of dropping a bunch of rose-buds deftly on a passing officer's head, Howard Denby emerged on the blue balcony, followed by Miss Nancy Hawse.

Had all the world paused, with only that whirl of Carnival noise sounding afar off in one's ears like turbulent waves, in a long, mutual gaze of recognition? Both paled perceptibly—Blanche from the sparkling animation of fun akin to frolic, and Howard in the suddenness of the surprise. At first there was no attempt at speech or greeting—the two merely looked at each other in trouble, doubt, and indecision whether to stop, or fly; then the young man advanced to the balcony side, and held out his hand. Blanche gave him three fingers reluctantly, and cast down her eyes.

Miss Nancy came to the rescue with beaming smiles. It was nothing to her that Margaret Pierman sat beyond. She had once more arranged the meeting of these two young people, who, according to her own belief, were born to make each other happy. Mrs. Pierman, contrary to all expectation, was aroused to animation by the advent of Howard Denby, and the astonishing circumstance of Miss Nancy's occupying the blue balcony. No doubt she had led the young man into the extravagance of renting it. Natures like Mrs. Pierman's are ever ready to discover the most unworthy motives in their fellow-creatures.

"John, do go into the next balcony to entertain your old friend Nancy, and send Mr. Denby to us," she requested, after a moment's hesitation.

"Very well," assented Dr. Pierman.

Howard Denby could scarcely credit his senses at the change. In a moment he was bending over Mrs. Pierman's chair, and standing beside Blanche; her dress touched his knee. To be sure, Mrs. Pierman allowed little opportunity for conversation between the young people: she was aroused to sudden interest in the young man because of Mrs. Cocks's friendly regard for him, and through that regard she hoped to learn of the movements of the lady. Howard Denby might even serve a double purpose: he would reveal nothing outwardly, of course, concerning the ruptured engagement; yet if Mrs. Cocks was mentioning the matter publicly, he would be aware of the fact, and she trusted to her own cleverness in reading his thoughts. Mrs. Pierman would be additionally miserable in learning such to be the case, and yet could not avoid the opportunity of striving to discover the truth.

Blanche was absorbed in the scene about her. Once Howard Denby restored a *bonbonnière* to her, and looked full in her eyes while so doing.

"Aim a little higher," he said, softly.

"Thanks, I will," retorted Blanche, stiffly.

What did he mean?

Dr. Pierman had shaken hands cordially with Miss Nancy, and sat down in one of the yellow satin arm-chairs comfortably. Miss Nancy would have welcomed him had he been one of those scarlet-clad *diavoli* of the crowd, or Rockwell Cocks, even. No, she would rather have him at the distance of the Pyramids instead, now that Howard Denby stood beside Blanche. Dr. Pierman, glad of the change in his wife which made it no longer awkward to speak with Nancy, inquired with real interest about her journeyings.

"And if I had dropped off into the Mediterranean at any time, he would never have known it," she thought, half bitterly, looking at the middle-aged, quiet man beside her.

Of what did his youth give promise? Heroic powers and splendid fulfillment, at least in her eyes. It was neither time nor place for cherishing bitterness and resentment.

Miss Nancy had rented the blue balcony for the Carnival, almost the first act of pure extravagance since her inheritance. Oh, the pleasure she had derived from it! She had invited her landlady's children, and gone into the by-ways for invalids unable to bear the crowd, and she had pelted with *confetti* and thrown bouquets, being quite impartial in her choice, which led her as often to select a pretty woman as a fine-looking man for her fragrant favors.

"The Roman Carnival is a thing of the past," observed Dr. Pierman, tamely.

"Then I do not know what it may have been," said Miss Nancy. "The people close their shops, and flock to the Corso still, and the princess smiles in her balcony amiably. It is a pretty show."

"And founded on the old Saturnalia," observed Dr. Pierman.

The current still eddied about the obelisk and in the wide, sunny Piazza del Popolo. What variety and amusement Miss Nancy found in the gay pageant! Here was a band of Arabs mounted, with turbans and gorgeous mantles; there a ship, with sail half furled; a tree of agile monkeys; a tiger, led by a cord; *contadini*, and devils innumerable, with frightful masks and droll gayety. The Englishman was invariably represented with the aid of a huge false nose and exaggerated plaid inexpressibles; the Chinaman, by a head-covering like a nasturtium blossom;

brigands, by fierce beards and muskets. Now the current of dark humanity parted in a wave for a Louis XVI. carriage, with outriders in scarlet, and snowy wigs, the king removing his laced hat to bow graciously from time to time. Your modern prince may drive unobtrusively in a neat landau like other gentlemen, but your Carnival prince must possess the old glittering splendor. What a good-natured people, and how much pleasure they made out of a masquerading dress!

The clown in white, with a black mask and bladder club, was never weary of his pranks. Miss Nancy came to regard him as an old friend, as he tapped the gendarme familiarly with his resounding weapon, or laid it over the shoulders of a dandy, or filliped a pretty peasant-girl under the nose, then ambled away absurdly in the wake of a carriage, only to re-appear again beneath the balcony with a bouquet, rescued from the gutter, to throw at Blanche Pierman. The harlequin, young, slender, and active, with a whole family party in his wake—probably from the Trastevere—of big maidens in dominoes, embryo clown much striped, and little shepherdess conscientiously wearing a mask too large for her, skipped aimlessly from side to side, finding enjoyment at every step, whether in chaffing the Roman matron in plaid shawl, with a silver crescent in her hair, or mocking at the soldiers, or tripping up the venders. If the Roman Carnival has waned, the children alone would redeem and render it charming. All along the Corso, grave and dignified little ladies, in stiff, flower-brocaded petticoats and powdered hair, gazed down from windows and balconies on the driving throngs of baby mountebanks in peaked caps; court gentlemen in blue silk small-clothes, curled wigs, and cocked hats; chubby peasant maidens, with red petticoats and tiny bodices, miniature embodiments of various costumes. Often a little dame in pink satin, sprigged with silver, roses and pearls in her hair, and lace kerchief folded quaintly across her breast, preceded her plainly dressed parents, who jogged after, exchanging glances of mutual pride. Often the father stood beside the carriage to give his little folk a glimpse, and although his hat might be rusty, the vehicle a shabby one enough, the small people were as smart as humble purse and family pride could make them.

Now came the little princelings in their carriage drawn by fat ponies like the fairy tales, scattering pretty trifles right and left, quite on a level with their subjects, butterflies within reach of any rude hand; chief of little court gentlemen these, in their rich costumes envy and admiration of all other babies. They passed directly beneath Miss Nancy's balcony, and actually looked up—the fairy princelings—for Master Tommy Pierman, hanging over the rim of the railing, launched his very best bouquet at them, knocking one jaunty hat over its owner's eyes, and, perceiving his error, retired discomforted.

"The pretty dears!" exclaimed Miss Nancy, and watched them with solicitude on their triumphal progress, lest the roguish clowns should lose their manners, or the scarlet devils prance, and the fat ponies run away.

Mrs. Pierman had gained her point by this time. Howard was impassive at the mention of the Cockses' name; but he had received a letter from Mrs. Cocks at Cairo. The young man had little idea of the importance such an acknowledgment had in the eyes of Mrs. Pierman. Her eagerness to converse with him was puzzling, and he wished to speak with Blanche before Dr. Pierman returned. The gun boomed and echoed along the line, the people began to move, and shout louder. Noise was to them more intoxicating than wine.

"There is to be an illumination of the Piazza di Spagna to-night," said Howard, hurriedly. "I suppose you will be there?"

"I don't know." Blanche was playing with her flowers somewhat listlessly; excitement in the day was waning.

"It will be the finest given for years," said the young man, fervently.

A dimple revealed itself at the corner of Blanche's mouth.

"No doubt the foot of the steps is the best point of observation, also," he said, presently.

"No doubt," assented Blanche, demurely.

Again the gun boomed along the line, and still the crowd swayed, rustled, and laughed in groups with rows of soldiers beginning to penetrate the ranks. Dr. Pierman had disappeared from the blue balcony, leaving Miss Nancy alone. There was just time for one more effort.

"I think you might come."

"Oh!" from Blanche, with dilating eyes, "these foreigners are so odd."

A lady across the street had tossed adroitly a bunch of lilies straight into Howard Denby's hands, as a parting salutation apparently. He flushed with pleasure, and removed his hat. Blanche disapproved of the bold proceeding. It seemed very strange to have another woman admiring the fine nose and gold mustache of her cavalier. How many girls had fallen in love with him in England already?

Then the third gun boomed forth its urgent, imperative summons. Glint of color, rattle of tambourine, surge of people into side streets, and a channel of pavement became discernible down the entire Corso, widening by degrees to a margin of soldiers and bristling bayonets pressing back the human tide thus pent up in narrowest lim-

its. To Miss Nancy this novel spectacle was the feature of the Carnival day—the channel of space from end to end of the narrow thoroughfare, the fringe of crowd below, the expectant faces leaning from the blue and pink and crimson balconies above, all waiting for the trumpet-peal to be taken up and echoed in the distance. What wondrous pageant might not be anticipated from this patient, good-humored, interminable time of waiting? There were no blows or scowls, as in an Anglo-Saxon mob of the sort; no interference necessary on the part of the police, save in the pilfering of bouquets by ragged urchins: the clowns capered absurdly on the curbstone; the harlequin raised his mask to light a huge cigar; the soldiers chatted with the civilians they kept in order. Indolent, deceitful, if you will, yet it is a race that inspires liking, an indefinable sympathy, by its smiling amiability, its *insouciant* day of sunshine existence. You may scold and shake your head in prim disapproval while putting your hand in your pocket for stray *soldi*, but the hand seeks the pocket none the less, won by brilliant dark eyes and white teeth and dusky faces.

The trumpet peals; all heads are turned toward the Piazza del Popolo. If an unfortunate little dog gets into the open space, it is hooted; the harlequin will dart out to gaze down the line. Then a few miserable horses, worried by fluttering tin on their flanks, appear, dash along, striking sparks with their hoofs, irresolute, frightened, and glad to reach the goal.

These are the famous *barberi*, and never was so much celebrity before attached to such mild and inoffensive "beasties." All is over in that flash of flying hoofs: one steed falls, and turns back in humiliation; and then the tide pent up so long flows back, closes from curb to curb more suddenly than the flight of the *barberi* to the stake.

That evening Miss Nancy observed extraordinary impatience on the part of her young friend, Howard Denby, to reach the illuminated piazza, and, drawing her own inference from the circumstance, put on her bonnet without a word of objection. The night was dark, serene, balmy, the deep-blue vault above studded with stars having the remote brilliancy as of glittering points of light, peculiar to northern latitudes. The Trinità steps were strung with garlands of tinted jets ascending from flight to flight in myriads of globes, crimson, green, pale-yellow, intermingled with wreaths of leaves, to the illuminated obelisk, which rose like a shaft of fire against the solemn darkness of the convent beyond. Did the nuns who chant with heavenly sweetness at vesper-time peep out from grated windows on the pyramid of variegated lights by which the Carnival world strove to climb to their threshold? Trinità da Monti seemed to spurn back the frivolous bubble of merriment, that sparkled like a rainbow for an hour, then perished, from its sombre fortress walls.

At the foot of the steps Blanche Pierman stood with both hands clasped over her father's arm. Presently she became subtly aware that Howard Denby was standing behind her, and nothing could be more natural than that he should join her while Miss Nancy conversed with her father. What a good old soul was Miss Nancy, and so considerate of the feelings of other people! The two immediately fell to singing her praises in duet, and Howard told Blanche about the school-marm's inheritance of Uncle Simon's money. Then they moved off to a point of vantage, and gradually disappeared; a fact which Dr. Pierman discovered with some astonishment, for he had been describing a mosaic manufactory in detail. Your elderly eyes are not so much dazzled by cones of red and green light, when music also pulses out of the darkness somewhere, but recognize the prosaic gas which produces the charming effect instead.

"They have gone up the steps; we can follow," said Miss Nancy.

When the seniors had reached the first broad platform Miss Nancy chose to pant, and pause by the stone parapet.

"John, I wish you to make me a promise," she said, suddenly and impressively.

"Very well, Nancy," returned Dr. Pierman, soberly.

He was looking very grave; either he was fatigued, bored, or some change had come over him since the afternoon. She could see that at a glance.

"Do not slight the young man, Howard Denby, as a suitor for your daughter Blanche. I have studied him, learned to know him, and I believe he is worthy of her."

Dr. Pierman's brow became furrowed; he bit his lip.

"That young man! Why, I have not exchanged a dozen words with him yet. Women have very quick insight into character, I grant—far superior to that faculty in men, Nancy; still, you must allow that your feelings sometimes blind your judgment."

"I do not acknowledge so at all," replied Miss Nancy, in some heat, then checked herself. She did not intend to argue the equality of the sexes, but Howard Denby's suit.

"I was in hopes that all this nonsense was over for the present. Blanche is too young for the thought of marriage," he said, presently.

"Howard Denby loves her as the darling deserves to be loved; I am sure of that fact; and he is one in a thousand. The young man would wait for her, John, as Jacob served for Rachel."

She could not help it, the words were uttered before she thought of their full mean-

ing. The arrow went home. How had John Pierman, in his proud, impetuous youth, served for her?

"I will follow your advice, Nancy, and give him a fair trial; but he must be patient, and wait long," said Dr. Pierman, half remorsefully.

If Nancy Hawse chose to interest herself in the welfare of his daughter as another generation, he was assured of her honesty of purpose, and it was a small return to make if he agreed to test Howard Denby. In his heart he was touched by the manifestation of regard. Perhaps this sense of reliance in her nature which all felt, and yet of which she was utterly unconscious, made him continue:

"I have had very bad news to-night, Nancy. The latest bank telegram states that the trust company where all Margaret's money is deposited has suspended. I have not told her, and the affair may not be as serious as that; still, I am going to London to-morrow on the strength of the rumor, and you alone know the true reason. If I leave all these affairs in your hands, courtship and lovers, will you promise to take care of them for me?"

He spoke lightly, but Miss Nancy answered, very solemnly, as she gave him her hand,

"I promise."

At the top of the steps in all the moving crowd a very different scene was transpiring. Blanche Pierman also leaned against the parapet looking down on the lighted vista below, and there were tears in her eyes, but she still clung to Howard's protecting arm.

"Am I to tell you what I have already seen of this wonderful old Rome? Why, la Reine Blanche, toujours la Reine Blanche, am I to tell you why I came? Because you were here."

His voice fell again on her ear with soft, wooing penetration, an under-tone to the swelling music, the quaint shapes of masqueraders flitting in the light, and there was sweetest balm of consolation in it to her young soul. Her mother had said no one would notice her after Rockwell Cocks's defection. Even now there was gall mingled in the honey of such delicious triumph of Howard Denby's return. Did he know? Did he love her?

Blanche did not glance up at him shyly, as at Rockwell Cocks; she was distressed, humbled, and ashamed. To what brackish stream had she stooped willfully, blindly polluting her lips, when the crystal purity of a fountain only awaited her! She was despicably unworthy of Howard Denby's generous love, and he would not see the fact in its true light. It seemed as if the broad, jovial face of Rockwell Cocks rose out of the darkness, mockery in the small, twinkling eyes, which said,

"I have kissed and caressed her; the world supposed her mine; she wore my ring on her finger. Pick up the flower I gathered and cast aside, if you will."

And this to Howard Denby, morbidly proud, with the world before him!

"There is a church here which has captivated my fancy," said Howard Denby. "Do you know ugly, deserted, damp St. Dorotea, where a priest admits you by a side door through the cloister?"

"Yes," said Blanche, doubtfully. She was acutely well aware of what would follow.

"The holy maiden going to martyrdom rebuked the heathen youth, Theophilus, for his unbelief, and promised to send him the fruit of paradise. On the altar you find carved the child-angel who brought the fruit and flowers to Dorotea, and she dispatched them by the angelic messenger to the heathen youth thus: 'Dorotea sends Theophilus the promised fruit of paradise.' Then great wonder and awe fell upon him, and he believed. Now, I know a youth to whom this rebuke came in the first glance of a no less pure and lovely maiden, for he was soured and disappointed, and she was a revelation to him of a higher existence. In all his dreams the child-angel Hope appeared, and brought him the fruit of paradise."

Blanche was very still; she appeared almost to have ceased to breathe as she turned away her head. Suddenly the light flashed up in myriad rays, clouds of pale amber shot with vivid sparks, intense metallic blue balls, and fountains of wavering, jetting flame athwart the whole space, meeting, blending in golden rings, and separating again, and the obelisk and the convent became transfigured. Then succeeded no less rapid, quenching darkness.

Howard Denby put his arm around Blanche and kissed her lips. The lights had not vanished, the clouds of pale fire seemed still to surround these two, separating, buoying them up into other spheres. She raised her hand, and touched his face.

"Oh, how beautiful you are, and how good!" cried the girl, impulsively.

Afterward she was walking along the dark and narrow street with her father, trembling, confused, dumb, led like one blind, and scarcely believing in her own happiness.

Mrs. Pierman had fallen asleep on her sofa.

"How red your face is!" she said, languidly, when Blanche came in.

"Only fancy, mamma, Miss Nancy Hawse has had a fortune left her, Mr. Denby says. How funny, and nice, too!"

Mrs. Pierman's features contracted, and even Dr. Pierman was silent.

"I hope she may not lose her head, then," said Margaret Pierman, dryly. The blue balcony looks somewhat like it, I confess. But did you not bring Mr. Denby home with you? I should like to see him."

"I think that he will call soon," replied Blanche, meekly.

In Miss Nancy's dreams the events of the day were marvelously blended. She saw again the *barberi* dash along the Corso, driving before them human beings, stripped to the waist, and goaded on by taunts from the crowd—Jews from the Ghetto who ran the race, not in the days of heathen supremacy in the brutal sports of the arena, but under Christian rulers. Curiously interwoven with this fact, she also stood on the Capitol steps once more where these same Jews came to pay a tax, with humiliating ceremonials, that the horses should run instead of themselves, and they be permitted to shrink back unmolested to their homes.

Never did a blue balcony yield more supreme satisfaction to a possessor than this one to Miss Nancy as she closed her eyes that night.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OLD ROMAN LACE.

"YOU are not to tell where we have been, understand, Marie."

"Very good, madame."

Mrs. Pierman had just emerged from the bank, and there was precisely the sum of twelve hundred dollars, rendered into Italian paper currency, in the purse held in her hand. The French maid Marie sat opposite in the carriage, sallow, thin-lipped, and with those oblique, furtive black eyes always observant, always vigilant. Mrs. Pierman had been far too much absorbed in her own thoughts to read a bulletin in the door-way of the bank, and she had left a very small residue of a letter of credit indeed, when drawing the sum now in her purse. The bulletin announced the suspension of the trust company where her funds were deposited.

"I must write to John for more money," she thought, leaning back in the carriage with a sigh of weariness. "This is a chance not to be slighted."

Mrs. Pierman's head ached as usual; she would have declined an invitation to any entertainment less than a court ball, and yet she nerved herself to unusual exertion, for the incentive was old Roman lace. The pursuit of wealth may flag, the possession of jewels pall, but the acquisition of lace never does. The delicate meshes, the frostwork of design, the whole fabric of perishable costliness has inthralled the feminine fancy in its net from the beginning, and there is no slavery in fashion so fascinated, so thoroughly docile in subjugation, as a woman's devotion to her laces. What extravagant and delightful recklessness a mere handful of silky blackness may represent! What taste and education in delicate perception of difference between this heap of yellow net-work and that! What burning sense of humiliation in the ignorance that admits of being possibly cheated in accepting false for the real article! A woman is less ashamed of a grammatical error in conversation, a misspelled sentence in her letter revealing defects of early education, than of being "taken in" on her lace. Whatever her sphere in life, she is supposed to have been born with an inherited knowledge of Brussels, Point d'Alençon, or Chantilly, and it is a disgrace to her sex if she fails to recognize either at arms-length.

Mrs. Pierman had devoted much leisure to the study of the subject. When she entered society she felt it necessary to take that body by storm in some brilliant *coup-de-main*, and she chose the weapon lace with entire success. The ugly saffron bands on Mrs. Pierman's velvet cuffs were known to be real Venetian, so old as to scarcely hold together; the Mechlin on her amber-satin reception dress was made for the late Princess M——; the white shawl which draped her shoulders so gracefully was the most expensive one of the pattern ever brought to America. This supremacy once established, Mrs. Pierman determined never to relinquish it, and fain would she now add to her store the article which has a musical sound to the ears of her countrywomen, even in the utterance—old Roman lace. The cunning craft has a sinister significance for any production so exquisitely lovely, of workwomen blinded by years of toil, of snares, not unlike those set by the wily insects imitated, that the innocent may fall.

"I can not do better," she soliloquized. "If you observe any thing amiss, tell me, Marie. I would not trust these women an inch, but I do trust you."

"Yes, madame," replied Marie, obediently.

Mrs. Pierman drove straight to the Ghetto, a region which the old traveler assures one is stripped of valuables, just as the Carnival has passed its prime, all things having passed away seemingly with his first impressions of Europe. Let such a one meet a calm, stout woman of forty, with olive complexion and penetrating eyes, in no way remarkable as to aspect; she may casually inquire as to his ultimate disposition of old clothes, and she will not do more unless especially encouraged to reveal hidden store of antiquities, possibly locks of value and great age, a bit of jewelry, and thus by degrees approach her fastness—Roman lace, imitation if practicable, and a final shred of the original if a connoisseur disputes her imposture. She gauges you with her dark eye, and cheats you if she can; but state not, O traveler! that she has no store for sale, because she has surveyed you, hands on hips, in some dark door-way, and suffered you to drive on without a wheedling protest.

Rags and tags, odds and ends, were heaped and littered everywhere, with an especial tendency to battered hats, placed one above the other, as children make daisy chains. Mrs. Pierman heeded not the evil odors, the swarming crowd, the mire of the way, the old walls toppling over the river's current: her thoughts were fixed on a low structure opposite the Cenci Palace, where she presently arrived. There was sunshine here; the large, massive building basked in the warm radiance of day as if the most terrible crimes had not stained its past; but the broad casements on the piazza were closed, and the doors had a sullen, barred aspect, like the darkened soul of Francesco, while sunbeams sought with their quivering golden arrows for living trace of Beatrice. Mrs. Pierman did not even study the pile; she had seen it before, and, instead, her glance strayed thoughtfully down toward the river.

"There were the woman in the Fuimara, and the dealer on the Piazza delle Tartarughe, Marie," she demurred.

"But the lace was not the same, madame," said Marie, firmly.

It was Friday afternoon, and the Ghetto was preparing for the Sabbath with baking of bread, and the sweeping out of sight of that industry in stitching, patching, and mending which renders the daughters of Zion such a marked contrast to the indolent Italian. *Stracci ferracci*—rags, clothes, drapery, the refuse cast aside by all Rome—seemed gathered here in variegated heaps, to be sorted with patient care and skill to serve thrifty ends.

Mrs. Pierman, thus advised by her trusty maid, entered a dark shop, made her way to a passage behind, and ascended a crooked, broken stairway with an earthy flavor and the scent of fish and oil. Above, in a small stone chamber, nearly destitute of furniture, the stout, olive-complexioned woman of forty awaited her guests. In half an hour the small chamber was scarcely recognizable. Two small casements, scarcely more than slits in the wall, revealed a glimpse of the Cenci Palace above a flower-pot, and on the floor below was a brazier unlighted; some richly carved furniture had appeared as if by magic; embroidery from Algiers lay beside striped Spanish fabrics, and a piece of ancient red velvet bordered with gold fringe hung over squares of silk, dear to the artist, and once used for balcony ornaments in city pageants, product of forgotten looms, in golden green sprinkled with softest sheen, and creamy pink veined with silver or faded prune, and lilac colored like Italian mountains in the hot noonday.

The stout woman, in producing these treasures, had unfastened a larger window with shutters, and over the red of the velvet she now spread fold after fold of the Roman lace on which Mrs. Pierman had already set her heart. The lady passed her fingers over it tenderly; Marie stooped to scrutinize the mesh; the shop-woman regarded them both with an inscrutable expression. The natural result was that Mrs. Pierman again entered the carriage with purse lightened and worldly goods increased considerably by the visit to the Ghetto. None of her friends should know what she had paid, or where she had obtained the prize.

Dr. Pierman had been absent for several days, his reasons for departure to London not very clear to his wife; but she had become accustomed to an absorption in the manifold interests of his profession which did not arouse her curiosity. During this short interval, Mrs. Pierman had also called on Miss Nancy, and permitted her to take Blanche about without herself. Nancy poor and Nancy rich made a world of difference in Mrs. Pierman's creed, although the change was not to her liking in the least. Already her restless ambition was shaping these cloud fragments to castles for her own future benefit. Nancy might leave her money to John's daughter from a lingering sentiment of early love for him. She would have treated this rustic ally differently from the first, had she foreseen events; still, it did not so much matter, since Nancy evidently bore no malice for her own previous negligence. If one could see who was to go up and who to go down in this life, treating them accordingly, every thing would be simplified.

The subdued happiness, the lapses into reverie and abstraction, in her child, did not escape Mrs. Pierman, and one night there had been a tremulous faltering confession on the part of Blanche concerning the love of Howard Denby for her, and the life they would lead in South America together. Blanche was already becoming an enthusiastic civil engineer under this new influence. Mrs. Pierman had listened skeptically, and almost without comment. Let matters take their course. Blanche could scarcely do worse than to espouse this penniless young man; still, he in turn might rise unexpectedly, and his devotion would serve as a useful appearance just after the defection of Rockwell Cocks. There are times and seasons when it looks well for a girl to have fallen in love most foolishly, Mrs. Pierman reasoned.

Thus she came home from the Ghetto, weak and tired as she had been for days; the sun, so carefully avoided by the natives, seemed to blind her and dazzle her brain. She passed the Church of the Cappuccini, and saw a brown-robed monk leading a party of tourists to the vaults below. Impulse led her to stop and consult her watch. In case Blanche had not yet left the hotel, she must account for her own absence, and conceal the lace for which she had paid twelve hundred dollars. She thought of it

with a little gasp of exultation, and horror at her own extravagance. Never mind; it would serve as an heir-loom in her family.

"I have never seen the vaults, and I can say that I have been here," she meditated, and went in.

From outside daylight and atmosphere already perfumed with spring violets, she passed to the most morbid horrors of the charnel-house. A clammy dampness oozed from the stone arches and the earth beneath; the windows were dimmed with dust gathered to a palpable film, like a yellow shroud for God's day. Fearful mockery of death, these skeletons dangling from pegs, these arabesque designs of skulls and bones, these garlands of human vertebræ, and, still more dreadful, the penance of the living so arranging the moldering remains of decomposition. Whose diseased imagination first beheld in these daily contemplation of skulls, of Jerusalem earth, of ghastly mummies, a glimpse beyond this world of immortality? The place made the strangest impression on Mrs. Pierman's mind that morning: she grew suddenly cold from head to foot, and yet lingered behind the others to gaze in horrified fascination at the yet filled graves—although fresh burial is now forbidden — and at the dried face peering from a cowl of the last monk disinterred, which seemed to grin at her with elfin mockery. The guide returned, a stout, hale person with black beard, and a snuffling intonation of his few English words: he fancied her interest was centred in an altar also made out of disintegrated humanity, and caused the joints to move and rattle with distinct articulation.

"Enough," she shuddered, and followed him hastily along the passage.

Her dress caught on some projection, a finger-bone protruded from a cornice to arrest her departure, the last mummy grinned and leered at her beneath the brown cowl.

"I should go mad if I had to pray daily here," she said, once more safe in the carriage.

"It is so *triste* in there, madame," observed Marie, shrugging her shoulders.

The Hotel San Vitale suited Mrs. Pierman's taste precisely. It was spacious, approached through a charming garden, and the entrance door revealed a glimpse of sunny court-yard beyond. On no consideration would Mrs. Pierman, feeling herself to be a patron of all this splendor, have stopped elsewhere in Rome, or had her friends seek a less stylish establishment. The corridors and stairways were like those of American hotels, the drawing-rooms sumptuous, the billiard and smoking quarters all that could be desired, and the charges by no means extravagant for the freedom of it all. Mrs. Pierman was very warm in her partisanship of the San Vitale, and resented deeply as a personal affront any of those vague alarms as to healthful locality which assail the traveling public. Did she not know? To be sure, there was a taint of gas which pervaded the spacious corridors at times, and Dr. Pierman preferred a sunny apartment on the Piazza di Spagna; but his wife would not consent to come at all unless the whole San Vitale were thrown open to her. People who were so fearful had best stay at home altogether. Accordingly Mrs. Pierman had been here located for three months, and found ample society among her own nation of an evening in the brilliantly lighted *salons*, while Blanche danced in the German, and the doctor whiled away time at the billiard-table.

Two circumstances the lady failed to notice: on this site stood the ancient Sabine Temple of Fever, while near the Quattro-fontane was the Temple of Salus, and the English, most cautious of travelers in regard to health, did not frequent the hotel.

When she returned she was relieved to find Blanche already gone, and a gay little note on the table explained that Miss Nancy had called for her earlier than was anticipated, and had taken a box for the evening at the opera. Mrs. Pierman sought her sofa with a sigh of relief, and, after again admiring her lace, suffered Marie to place it under lock and key. Really, there was no limit to Miss Nancy's urbanity; she had carried off Tommy as well for the afternoon drive. Solitude was not irksome to the mother just then. She closed her eyes, and the dead atmosphere of the Capuchin vaults again came over her; she saw the last monk grinning beneath his cowl. What was Marie saying? No, she did not wish any thing to eat; a little wine-and-water would do. Then a quick suspicion darted through her mind that the lace might not be safe from theft. She unlocked the trunk where Marie had placed it, and took it instead to one of her husband's. Dr. Pierman's effects were pushed about with scanty ceremony—what did it matter for a man's clothes?—and as she removed a folded coat papers rattled out of the reversed pocket on the floor. She moved them aside with her foot, carelessly; then, on second thoughts, gathered them up to replace in the trunk. Her eye lighted on an envelope directed to "Dr. John Pierman, care of Monroe & Co., Rue Scribe, Paris," dated months back. Did Nancy Hawse correspond with her husband? There was nothing tragic in the discovery; Mrs. Pierman was not a bride to pale over the *billets-doux* of a former love, but she was capable of being a jealous woman, and wondered now at her own lack of emotion. She carried the letter back to her sofa, and deliberately perused it.

For the first time she learned that it was Nancy Hawse who had called attention to the evil career of Rockwell Cocks, and bid Dr. Pierman watch the young man, and she

was now fostering a match with Howard Denby. Mrs. Pierman raised herself on the sofa, her features convulsed, then sunk slowly back again. She had been herself a tool while intending to use them. Fool! fool!

Presently the whole room echoed her own words until she was frightened by the reverberating sound. "Fool! fool!" up under the lofty ceiling, ringing from the walls, whispering from dark corners: she was conscious of putting her hand over her ears in desperation at the wearisome repetition. How curious it was, the voices coming and going like that! Nancy Hawse had broken off the great match. How tiresome it was to utter it over: Nancy Hawse, always Nancy Hawse! Measure for measure. Who said that? The ceiling, the floor, or the shadowy corners? Measure for measure. Stay, that was not the Bible's merciful doctrine; it must be the Capuchin bones. Oh, what nonsense, Capuchin bones having a doctrine! She was growing absolutely silly; she laughed weakly. Nancy Hawse had banished Rockwell Cocks. That was it. She must remember; keep it to herself. Roman lace for twelve hundred dollars. Fie, what a sum! No, no; not to the Corso, coachman, but to the Ghetto. Why did he join the Carnival, when she said Ghetto instead? The whirl of maskers troubled her brain. Strange, grotesque heads peered through the puffing clouds of *confetti*. Somebody said the scarlet *diavolo* had the lace, or knew where to find it. Tell him to drive straight to the Ghetto, Marie. How the crowd surged, like waves of color, aching, confusing noise, babble of shrill tones! It was rude to push a lady about so. The man in armor fell over on his face like a thin pasteboard toy. The scarlet *diavolo* knew about the lace, real Roman lace? There were a thousand scarlet *diavoli* running, jumping like insects — horrible! and they drove her forward irresistibly as if her feet scarcely touched the ground. This swiftness of motion was incredible, delightful, terrible, and deprived one of breath; it was being drawn by a wind toward a low door she was reluctant to enter, the door of the Capuchin vaults. Oh, how cold she was in the deadly fear of the place! If the skulls danced, or the skeletons should sway on their pegs in the awful stillness succeeding all the Carnival noise, she must shriek aloud, shrinking back against the chill stones of the wall. Oh, how cold she was, and nobody came!

Marie glanced into the room, holding Tommy back; Mrs. Pierman lay asleep on her sofa. The maid did a curious thing; she sent Tommy away to play in the halls, and, seeking the bunch of keys in a well-known drawer, stole cautiously to the trunk where she had been told to place the morning's purchase. The lace was gone! Mrs. Pierman groaned in her slumber; Marie closed the lid, and moved away like a cat.

Whatever was left of effervescing Carnival hilarity by the day had brimmed over into the Teatro Apollo for the evening to witness a new opera, "Il Guarany."

The pretty interior was bright with light, and the animated audience was moved as quickly as sunbeams rippling over the current of a rapidly flowing stream to stormy applause or fiercer hisses. This petulance in judgment gave *verve* to the performers; made the tenor's sweet voice ring out with additional fervor, the prima donna pose more gracefully before the foot-lights, and the *maestro*, no doubt, more anxious for the success of his work. All the tiers were full of brilliant toilets, the paler hues ordained by Northern fashions ever deepen to richer shades to suit the luxurious Southern eye; and here mauve or rain-washed blue became royal purple and cerulean tints. The princess sat in her box, beneath a glow of radiant chandelier and gilded coronet, as if basking in the rays of royalty, and formed the central gem of the chain inclosing the whole interior of the house.

Who so beaming and happy as Miss Nancy Hawse, with her young friend, Blanche Pierman, well placed in the best seat, and her young friend, Howard Denby, conveniently near one shell-like ear of the girl, in case any inspiration should come to him amidst the brightness and music. Could any thing have been more fortunate than the choice of opera? Miss Nancy was persuaded it was composed solely for her two companions by the *maestro*, and that the fashionable Roman world, from the princess down to humbler ranks, had gathered for the same end to honor the occasion. What a beautiful world it was, full of gentleness and kindness and noble motives, after all!

Il Guarany was an Indian who dwelt in realms near the present city of Rio de Janeiro, at the time of the first Portuguese adventurers; and the noble savage was torn by conflicting emotions, uttered in melodious measure at the front of the stage, between hatred of the invaders and chivalrous devotion to a certain Dónna Clara in white muslin, of their number, whose mission seemed to tame his untutored soul by sweet song from pasteboard towers and balconies. This system of enchantment had the effect of making him twang his bow energetically, show the whites of his eyes very much, and vow vengeance on the young cavalier who aspired to her hand. What mattered it that caziques wore beards of European style? Their ear-hoops were conspicuous, and they trailed leopard-skins as they walked with savage grace. The ballet carried pretty bows and arrows, in costume like the "children of the leaves;" there were real wigwams in the background, and palm-

trees rising against the golden mirage of sky, suggestive of tropical heat.

Howard Denby was telling Blanche about these palms, these majestic rivers with banks so clothed in vegetation that nature has not yet made place for man.

"Poor fellow! I hope he will come out all right in the end," reflected Miss Nancy, moved by the misfortunes of the tenor; and then she turned around, and observed the usher standing in the door claiming attention.

Howard Denby was leaning over Blanche, whispering caressingly. Miss Nancy would have allowed him to go to the usher, but for one circumstance: she saw over the intruder's shoulder the face of Marie, the French maid. Never to her dying day will Miss Nancy forget the picture indelibly stamped upon her memory at that moment —Howard Denby bending over Blanche, then the rim of box with the space of parquet beyond, the opposite tier of boxes, the princess sparkling with diamonds beneath the chandelier, and Il Guarany singing his melodious sorrows, with the penetrating sweetness and warmth of tone only found in the Italian voice. She rose, and went swiftly to the door.

"What is the matter?" she inquired, quickly.

Marie's face was white, her teeth chattered, and she wore a long cloak enveloping her entire form. Madame was ill; had been so for days, Marie knew, and the people had sent for the great Italian physician, who was at the hotel this hour. She had run for mademoiselle when she could get away.

Miss Nancy felt as if a cold hand were laid on her heart. She drew Marie farther along the corridor.

"What is it?" she whispered, hoarsely.

"Mon dieu! the fever."

After that, Miss Nancy went back to her companions. Blanche was saying,

"Then we shall swing in hammocks under the trees, dear, and grow very lazy."

"Howard must escort me to a carriage, and then he will come back for you, my darling," said Miss Nancy, very gently. "Something has happened, and I must go home."

Before Blanche could recover from her surprise, Miss Nancy was gone, telling Howard Denby what to do in the vestibule; then drove away from the opera-house alone. Marie had disappeared; and it is a fact that another carriage at the same moment was conveying the trusted servant to the dépôt, she having in her traveling-bag a small roll of old Roman lace, recently purchased in the Ghetto.

The night was still, warm, almost oppressive; a blue fog stole through the darkened streets, enveloping house after house in its murky, unwholesome embrace. Miss Nancy had promised John Pierman to take care of his own. Thus she pursued her way, and the fog and the darkness kept pace with her.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EASTER MORNING.

THE door of No. 12 on the first corridor of the Hotel San Vitale stood wide open; the room was plainly seen to be unoccupied; the crimson curtains were neatly arranged about the fresh linen of the bed; a *femme de chambre* was chatting from the open window, through which the sun streamed, with a porter in the court below. Steps were heard approaching, and voices, the varying tones of inquiry and response, and a servant appeared with a party of tired and dusty travelers. No. 12 was one of a charming suite of rooms, airy, fresh, and handsome, with the cheering sunshine coming in—a haven of rest to the weary tourist.

"Seems to me it smells of carbolic acid in this closet," observed paterfamilias, sniffing suspiciously.

"Oh, pa, how you do go on!" exclaimed a chorus of remonstrating young voices, just tinged with scorn. "Every one knows the San Vitale is perfectly splendid, and lots of fun."

"Been no illness here, eh?" questioned paterfamilias, still sniffing in distrust.

No illness this year, the servant was prepared to affirm, and paterfamilias subsided to contentment.

Gay voices and assured steps in the daylight, but at midnight the previous evening the door of this very No. 12 had swung open noiselessly, and, with muffled tread, stealthy movements, suppressed tones, a woman sick unto death had been borne along the hushed corridors up many a weary stair to a hiding-place, a refuge under the roof, where she might lie undisturbed and out of sight.

Gold could not buy her possession of the bed with the crimson canopy, or persuasion of any sort leave her in the cheerful sunshine of No. 12. She was an intruder, smitten with a mortal malady, infecting the air she breathed, dependent on the charity of the Hotel San Vitale to cast out into the street or retain. The fiat had gone forth from physician and anxious landlord: she must be removed up under the roof, out of sight, and, if possible, be forgotten. Marvelous clemency this, not to dispatch her out into the night and a hospital instead.

The woman smitten was Margaret Pierman, consumed with fever, raving with delirium, or lapsing into unconsciousness, and the burden of her care devolved on Miss Nancy. She it was who battled with the board of health improvised, in desperate hope of Dr. Pierman's return to help her stem the

tide of opposition; herself shunned by every one, from her dangerous propinquity to her charge, with the double anxiety of keeping Blanche away from danger. She it was who sent Master Tommy to her rooms with Blanche to take care of him ostensibly, the maid Marie having run away from the scene of peril; and Howard Denby passed his time between the two houses. Blanche often rose in flat rebellion against this arrangement, and insisted on nursing her own mother, at least with Miss Nancy; but the older woman was firmly opposed to the risk, curbed the girl's distress of inaction by throwing Tommy on her care, and urged the necessity of keeping him from contagion. This argument benumbed Blanche to silent tears, and she waited.

Since the night when she had been summoned from the opera so suddenly, and found Mrs. Pierman past all recognition of her surroundings, to Miss Nancy the hours were days, and the days interminable weeks, each moment fraught with fatigue, anxiety, alarm, and the shock of manifold changes in the progress of illness. Dr. Pierman had been telegraphed at London, and had gone to Manchester; yet only four days had elapsed when the citadel of Miss Nancy's last resistance to physician and landlord and proprietor yielded. At midnight those scuffling, stealthy steps had passed along the corridor, bearing Mrs. Pierman upstairs, Miss Nancy walking beside her, and Howard Denby bringing up the rear.

All was clean and fresh and cold in the new chamber. Miss Nancy's heart went out to the helpless creature cast upon her mercy so unexpectedly, thrown into her very arms: the strongest impulse of her nature was protection. She smoothed the pillow for Margaret Pierman's head, and kissed her hot cheek; then fell on her knees, and prayed for her recovery, with bitter weeping, the first tears she had yet shed.

"Consider her family, O Lord! her husband, and the children who would come to her, if I would let them!" prayed Miss Nancy.

The sick woman was also uttering words soft and low:

"The roses were white. Is father's dinner ready in the tin pail? I hate my sunbonnet."

The next morning Dr. Pierman arrived, haggard and care-worn; not the cheerful physician who entered the sick-chamber of patients at home with a pleasant word of encouragement, but a man to whom trouble had come in heavy loss of property before the tidings of his wife's illness had reached him. Miss Nancy's measures were strictly enforced by him; Blanche and Tommy, even Howard Denby, were banished, while these two remained chief nurses, with the aid of a *Sœur de Charité* who stole in at night, bringing one of those serene faces, framed in white lawn, to the sick-bed. Miss Nancy herself was urged to withdraw for a time, but the feeble hands were found to cling tenaciously to her, as the blind clutch at one who leads them safely along. This might have been only instinct, the merest animal sense of groping for help; yet the appeal was inexpressibly touching to the nurse, who took the poor scorched fingers in her own cool supple ones, and spoke soothingly to the sufferer.

"Nancy," murmured Margaret Pierman, with the wan shadow of a smile on her face.

Thus the vigil wore on. All realized it to be only a vigil long before the end came. If the great physician had been summoned before, when the poison was slowly instilling into her veins; if her husband had been at hand during those days of overmastering weariness, the crisis might have been averted. *If* is the pivot on which swings perpetual existence in the reasoning of this world. Her children had failed to notice much amiss—Mrs. Pierman had spent so many of her mornings on a sofa, and her evenings at a ball. Blanche went out with Miss Nancy and her lover, in heedless tripping youth, while the mother was being slowly gathered under the shadow of death. Tommy had played in the court and garden. Miss Nancy had been still too shy of Margaret Pierman's overtures of peace to observe her closely.

Roman fever, most dreaded shape of modern maladies, lurking in wait for the soldiers recruited for the Eternal City and the king's army; lurking also in wait for the pilgrims, sickening in radiant, fiery sunshine, and chilled in shadowy temples; watching hungrily in the gloaming where earth is wet with dews to trip languid, weary feet; smiting with still more daring aim vigorous manhood, and gathering to its abundant fields of harvest blooming youth and buoyant childhood! She was only another victim.

Smuggled out of sight up under the roof, a person set apart, not spoken of below-stairs much, shuddered over a little in *salon* and corridor, with pale, questioning faces, as if pestilence were stalking abroad. There were voluble excuses, reasons advanced, at times: the fever came through Mrs. Pierman's own imprudence, of course; and in this consoling view of the case the other occupants of the great caravansary were re-assured, expressing sympathy when not afraid of contagion, and went their several ways. Dr. Pierman had need of his would-be son-in-law in these days—Jacob anxious to serve for Rachel—who was a communicating medium with the outside world, and in whom the stricken husband and father found support, reliance of the best sort, through unexpressed and active sympathy.

Through the long, long hours of delirium

the world-worn, anxious woman stretched on that bed wandered ever back to the entrance gate of childhood, and Briarbush, humble village among the hills. As Miss Nancy listened, all the intervening years seemed wiped away, for it was always to her hand the weak fingers clung, and to her the sharp, eager questions about forgotten nooks and incidents were addressed. Did Nancy remember the stone house by the foot-bridge, where the little garden-snake ran out and hissed at them? Could Nancy climb the rock above the water-fall where the white, rushing foam made one giddy? Perhaps it was the scent of flowers in the window, the morning gift of Howard Denby —Roman violets fringed with delicate ferns —that guided these ramblings, where Nancy must always come. Far below, the daily routine of the great metropolis went on undisturbed; the chariot of Carnival pleasure had long since rolled into the succeeding quiet of Lent. Miss Nancy came to feel herself isolated in some remote tower-turret, with the sound of Margaret Pierman's voice forever in her ears. Poor brain and poor lips, forced by that wasting frenzy of delirium to continual thought and continual speech!

The invalid was never violent. She accepted two circumstances of her condition with the resignation of despair: a brown-cowled, skeleton Capuchin monk sat ever on the foot of her bed; and the walls were decorated with wreaths of human bones, which she strove vainly to count, until Miss Nancy soothingly led her back to Briarbush and childhood once more.

The Carnival tide had merged into sober, repentant Lent, and Lent in turn had worn away to Easter-even, when Miss Nancy sat again by the window, and the chamber was wrapped in the profound repose of slumber. At last Mrs. Pierman's voice had ceased in the collapse of unconsciousness. She was better or worse, in that poising of the balance between hope and fear. Dr. Pierman, worn with watching and grief, had gone out some time before at Miss Nancy's earnest solicitation. If the patient's sleep were a healthy one, she might yet be saved; and the nurse by the window scarcely ventured to breathe. From her post she could see the clear expanse of sky, and one pure star that seemed to watch with her. A clock struck midnight somewhere near. A ball was in progress down-stairs; light feet were tripping over polished floors to strains of inspiriting music. We must be gay when Roman fever stalks abroad, as the Florentines feasted on the brink of the plague-pit. The star beamed with rapid scintillations above in the dome of sky, and Miss Nancy gazed at it with thoughts far away. She also trod the wood paths in Briarbush again, following Margaret Pierman's capricious fancy.

"Nancy!" the voice was low, weak, altered.

For the first time in that chamber Miss Nancy, steady of nerve, rose from her seat with her heart in her throat and trembling limbs.

"Yes, Margaret."

"I told a lie when I was young. I said you were to marry Humphrey Baylis."

Miss Nancy strove to control the convulsive sobs that would come.

"What does it all matter now, Margaret? You have been very ill—another time—"

She bowed her head on the coverlet, not to see the large eyes, open so wide, now mournful, fixed. If a soul is ever permitted retrospect of life, pausing on the threshold of the invisible beyond, Margaret Pierman then looked back with one sweeping, awe-struck glance.

"Marry John when I am dead," the weak voice went on. "Pray—to God for my forgiveness."

Miss Nancy raised her head. A blank of great fear passed like a quiver of sharp pain over the face on the pillow.

"The Capuchin monk is coming back! *No, no, not for my soul—a saint is praying for me!*"

Dr. Pierman entered the room, and Miss Nancy went to meet him.

"She is delirious again, I fear," she whispered.

Three of the clock. Miss Nancy sat again by the window; the star had waned. Dr. Pierman was bending over the bed, from whence no more articulate words came. The door opened silently, and Blanche entered, followed by Howard Denby. There was defiance in the girl's impetuous entrance as of one spurning longer banishment; but she laid her head on her mother's hand, with a low, shuddering sob.

The Hotel San Vitale slept; the dancers nestled among their pillows, dreaming of pretty faces or admiring glances; the last weary porter, after admitting Blanche, had crept into the hole he called his own.

Thus the Easter morning dawned, gilding St. Peter's and the Pantheon, resting on the ruins of the Coliseum and Cæsar's house, Arch of Titus, or Constantine, counting in their gray antiquity the single life-throbs of centuries. Easter morning, rose-flushed with dawn's hope of joyous noonday, promising the resurrection; but Margaret Pierman did not awaken.

A month later, two persons, a lady and gentleman, were walking on an apparently well-known path which led to a fresh grave in the Protestant Cemetery. Above them the cypress-trees, no longer shedding the blue smoke of spring blossoms, yet spread a dark shade over the grass still flecked with violets amidst the white head-stones; and on the left the tomb of Caius Cestius rose,

plain and severe, itself a stranger, having outlived its age, guarding the resting-place of strangers; ashes of Shelley burned at Lerici, remains of Gibson, and those flowers gathered from ranks of English, American, German homes. Here was the foreigner's burial-place in unconsecrated ground.

"And gray walls molder round, on which dull Time
Feeds like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble."

The two visitors paused beside their grave, making some subdued comments on the monument, suited in word and gesture to the deep mourning of the gentleman.

"Nancy, I heard poor Margaret's last words to you," he said, at length.

"It was delirium, John," replied Miss Nancy, quickly, endeavoring to shield the dead woman in her grave.

The oxen came slowly through the Porta San Paolo, with tinkle of bells and creaking of heavy wheels; the green meadows stretched away to the Monte Testaccio lying in full sunshine; and on the other hand rose the pyramid, time-stained and indestructible, on which St. Paul's mortal gaze once rested, and which now guarded the last sleep of an American woman in a foreign land.

Life and death are marked by the oscillation of Time's pendulum. Inevitably as the limit of the grave in Rome has been reached in the Protestant cemetery amidst sorrowful shadow, the pendulum must swing back toward hope and life again.

The sun will dawn on a happy home in South America, where Blanche, courageous wife and serene mother, will sway in the hammock beneath the palm-trees, while that calm young man, Howard Denby, with the steady, unflinching Northern eye, fuses the materials placed at his command by nature, working with enthusiasm, for the first time, because of an expectant face watching for him and small baby feet that strive to meet him at the door.

The sun will dawn on Briarbush, tinging the old red homestead with homely warmth, where grandmother may often be seen behind the panes of the sitting-room window, spectacles on nose; but the radiance will linger long on the slope of hill and the minister's head-stone—a cheerful spot, not associated with the terrors of death; where the children pause on their way from school with merry prank and bubbling laughter.

A ray of this impartial sun of the future will also fall on the threshold of Dr. Pierman's town house, modest and unassuming, but where some of the kindly spirit of hospitality peculiar to the minister's home at Briarbush will find its way with the new mistress. He is to begin life all over again, stimulated to fresh courage by the interest of his wife in all his favorite pursuits; and a prominent ornament of his office may be a skeleton mouse under glass, first effort of a medical student in the years gone by. She will not be a fashionable lady in the least, this second wife, and her laces will not be remarkable, but Mrs. Cocks and her friends will take pleasure in visiting her, as well as the city poor, who flock with unfailing instinct to her door.

Dear reader, shall we be able to recognize in her—you and I—the plain Miss Nancy of our pilgrimage?

THE END.

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